

















“ I Want You to Get Into These ”

# JEANNE

BY

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Jeanne

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*To*  
“PEGGY” WOOTTON  
*in particular*  
*and to*  
*all the lovers of “Babs”*  
*in general*  
*this book is affectionately*  
*dedicated*



## Introduction

WHEN you enter your teens, you seem at last to begin to live life, and daily you have the belief and the hope that "something" will happen. This "something" is always very vague in every particular but one. It is definitely and unquestionably "exciting." For each of you excitement takes a different form, depending upon the customs and surroundings of your lives. And to very few of you, I am sure, come the terrors and the thrills that came to Jeanne in the devastated region of France. When you read of her miraculous escape to happiness and think how many more girls probably were never so lifted from sorrow to joy, you will find, I think, a greater contentment in your own world, for all its dull gray sameness.

But whether you envy Jeanne her adventures or congratulate yourselves on your escape from such, you cannot help but applaud her for her courage and sweetness and generosity

## *Introduction*

through her loneliest and loveliest year. And as she comes to you, at once shy and eager, it is my hope that she will not be disappointed in her welcome.

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# Jeanne

## CHAPTER I

### THE END OF THE WORLD

THE little town of Bellebois was still under a hot September sun. It was a strange stillness; not a restful quiet, but rather an alert quiet as though strained and listening ears were waiting for some sound to break the calm.

In the wide shady street not a soul was to be seen. Houses, apparently empty of all life, stood in a grim silence, their doors ajar, and windows half open, seeming to gape in surprise at something sudden and terrific that had occurred not long since. In the shopping district wares were left carelessly to the open air or the thieving passer-by while the owners were nowhere in sight.

A white road cut the little town exactly in half. Standing in the centre of Bellebois—in the business part of it—on this single thoroughfare one could look for miles over

open country either way. Homes were laid out on either side, their fronts to the deserted street, their walled-in gardens backing to deep woods. Gleaming through the darkness of foliage could be seen the white spire of the church, built a little way out of town at some distance from the homes, but most beautifully situated in a cleared space in the deep green woods.

Suddenly the mellow tones of the church bell rang out on the still air. It had the effect of an alarm. Birds rose from secret hiding-places in sudden fright; a baby's wail cut the heavy air of the summer's day, footsteps sounded on the sidewalk and a clear high child's voice called out:

“I'm going to the church, Mama! Pere Renard summons us!”

“Very well, cherie. Make all haste back to Grandmere and me, else I shall worry.”

A slim girl in her early teens ran out of one of the most imposing houses on the street, turned and waved a hand at an upper window, then hurried along the dusty road to overtake a neighbor.

“Madame Dupigny!”

“Oh—you—Jeanne!”

The older woman, her baby in her arms, little Antoinette clinging close to her skirts, fell into step with Jeanne. They had been next-door neighbors for years;—two of the oldest and most aristocratic inhabitants of Bellebois. Madame Dupigny had watched Jeanne’s growth from babyhood and her eyes rested very lovingly on the little girl beside her.

“How is Grandmère to-day?”

“Well, thank you, but growing more confused and alarmed all the time. She does not understand this evacuation. She cannot believe there is really a war—and danger. Do you really think there is, Madame?”

Madame did not know what to say. This child was such a child, so innocent and lovely; yet not to warn her would be a cruelty and wrong she could not carry on her conscience.

“There is grave danger, Jeanne,” she said at last, just before they reached the cloistered coolness and safety of the little white church.

Here were gathered a handful of people, mostly the very old and very young, those left in Bellebois who had been too weak to rush to safety when the alarm came that the Germans

were on the way. They gathered now, frightened but calm, close to their beloved Pere Renard. For all his stooped slimness, white hair and peaceful old face, he was to those pitiful few French souls an inspiration for courage. He possessed a strength that reached the people through his calm deliberate tones, his level glance. No one was so terrified when near good Pere Renard. He began speaking slowly.

“The Germans will reach Bellebois before nightfall. I adjure you all to meet these people with politeness and calm. Give them what they ask, remembering that if they take everything there is always food and shelter here in the church. We have enough stored away in the depths of the church cellar to care for us all for a month. Let their greed not alarm you. They will pass through quickly, I believe,—I hope. And we will then gather here again to renew our larders and benefit by mutual help.”

He paused a moment, then lifted the heavy gold cross that hung over his black gown.

“In the name of our Saviour—and of France,—keep your courage steadfast.”

Jeanne had stood silently by Madame Dupigny through this short speech, her great brown eyes widening, her delicate coloring fading in her tense excitement. Madame glancing down at her, dreaded for this delicate flower-like little bit of womanhood, the next few hours, as much as she dreaded them for her own children.

They went home together, silent except for a brief sentence or two. At her door Jeanne nodded good-bye and Madame went on to her own home.

“Mama! Mama!”

Jeanne’s excited cry echoed through the big still house. Following it she bounded up the wide stairs and into the big room at the top.

Madame Lanier straightened from bending over a trunk she was packing.

“Yes, dear?”

Jeanne gasped out her news in short breaths.

“The Germans! Father Renard says they are coming! They are here, Mama. What shall we do?”

The beautiful dark-haired woman picked up a box of jewelry, a roll of silver and some papers, and in silence stowed them away in a

secret cupboard in the wall of the room. Then she dusted her slender white hands on her apron, pushed back the curling locks that fell low on her forehead and turned back to Jeanne.

“Did Father Renard say that surely, dear?” she asked.

“Most certainly, Mama. A rider went through the town an hour since. He must have borne the news. I heard him from the garden.”

“I was busy,” Madame Lanier replied. “I heard nothing. Here, Jeanne, help me to push this chest before the cupboard. Perhaps then the Boches may not perceive it.”

“What is it? What is the matter?” came a quavering voice from the next room where Jeanne’s grandmother sat all day, straining her nearly deaf ears to understand what was going on, and living in worse terror, because of the knowledge denied her, than those who heard all the dreadful rumors.

“Run get Grandmère, Jeanne,” her mother commanded. “Bring her in here with us. Hurry.”

Jeanne ran from the room and in a few min-

utes came in, her little hand tucked supportingly under her aged grandmother's arm.

"Don't be afraid, Grandmere," she said gently to the sweet-faced, silver-haired lady. "We won't let the Germans hurt you—Mama and I. Here is your chair. See, here by the window. Now you tell us when you see them. What are you doing, Mama?"

"I want you to get out of your clothes and into these," her mother commanded, her voice suddenly sharp as Jeanne had never heard it.

"But those are ragged dirty boy's clothes, Mama," Jeanne cried in dismay, "and my frock is so pretty. Please, Mama."

Her mother sat down on the chest by the wall and drew Jeanne to her. There with her gaze on the wide earnest one of the brown eyes so like hers, she explained.

"Listen, dear," she said, and though her voice was soft again as Jeanne knew it, it was also stern, "in but a little while, perhaps a few minutes only, the Germans will be here. They are bad and cruel and they like to tease pretty little girls; but if they see a boy here, a brave boy who is polite always, but unafraid, they may perhaps be kinder. See, these are very

funny. We will play you are a little—what they say in America—ragamuffin."

As she spoke she was slipping off Jeanne's dainty, blue and white dress, her white slippers and stockings, her lace petticoat, and in a second the slender little girl was garbed in a boy's brown blouse, open at the throat, and blue overalls, and her feet were lost in a pair of clumsy black, lace boots. Even so the ragged clothing did not hide the girl's beauty and Madame Lanier looked at her with critical anxious eyes.

"Your hair," she murmured, and she caught up a pair of big shears.

"They are coming!" Grandmère cried suddenly in a high shrill voice. "They are coming! I see a cloud of dust! What shall we do?"

"Sit still where you are," Jeanne's mother answered in that new low commanding tone of hers. "Come here, Jeanne."

And with lips set, she cut off her daughter's long golden ringlets and left her head in a jagged, ragged mass that despite its roughness still shone with beauty. Jeanne was so frightened at her mother's manner that she did not

complain at this. In a twinkling a cap was thrust on Jeanne's head; her shorn curls and pretty clothes on the floor were stuffed into the stove. Her mother, after another critical glance, had wiped some stove dirt on Jeanne's white hands and arms and face; and then Jeanne's shoulders were caught in a strong grip and her mother's dark eyes were glowing into hers. As she spoke, there came to them through the still air the sound of many tramping feet.

"I see a gray mass! It must be soldiers marching! They are endless!" Grandmère cried.

"Jeanne, listen to me carefully. Whatever happens to Grandmère or me, you are to be brave. Do not cry. Do not be afraid. Remember you are a daughter of France and they are always, always fearless. And above all things do not forget you are a boy. Your name is now Jean, not Jeanne. Do you understand?" She emphasized the two pronunciations. Jean was French for John.

Jeanne's eyes sparkled with fiery courage.

"Oui, oui, Mama!" she cried with upflung head. "I do understand!" Then her eyes

caught sight of her timid, weak Grandmere. "How shameful that Marie and Annette and all the other servants ran away from us, Mama!" she cried. "Just us to take care of things!"

"No, it was not disgraceful. It was right," her mother replied steadily. "Those who could go, should, but Grandmere is too old to travel. Come, Jeanne, take her out into the garden with you. I will wait for the Boches."

So each on a side of old Grandmere helped her for the last time down the stairs, through the beautiful big house, out the back door into the lovely old walled-in garden.

"Perhaps you may be alone here. It may be better," Mama explained to Jeanne as she seated Grandmere in a chair. Already they heard sharp commands, rumbling wheels and the clatter of advance horsemen. "Listen, petite. Do not leave Grandmere alone. You are a brave boy, you remember, and you must protect her. If ——" she hesitated, then went on steadily, "If we should be separated, if anything happens to the house, you must go to America, to these people." She thrust into

Jeanne's pocket a slip of paper on which was written a name and address.

"Guard it, dear," she finished in a whisper as the tramping feet came up the street. "They are friends—good people—who loved your brave, laughing father. They will take care of you."

Jeanne's big eyes were wider than ever with the importance and suspense of the moment. She could only nod briefly before tramping feet were heard through the house and loud voices; then came the flinging wide of the back door.

Mama hurried to greet the big German officer and quickly shut the door behind her. Jeanne and Grandmere, fourteen to protect eighty-nine, were left alone.

The next six hours were fearful and breathless to Jeanne. So many times she crept trembling to the window to peer in at her beautiful Mama, waiting like a servant upon those pigs of Boches. With hands clenched and eyes snapping she would run back to Grandmere and tell her all she saw.

"The house is full of them!" she whispered. "They go up the stairs, down in the cellar—

everywhere. They break and smash and cut. They demand to eat. Mama tries so hard to understand and to please and they pay no attention that she is a lady and gentle born. I wish I were a boy, a real boy. I should go in and—and—and—tell them things!"

And she clenched her smutted hands and stole again to the window.

The hours went by, three, four, five of them. Darkness fell, suddenly lightened by fires. Grandmere's keen eyes knew them to be homes of her friends, and she trembled, but Jeanne grew fiercer.

"I am going in there with Mama," she announced. "She is tired—so white—and her eyes so big. I must show them she has a son who will take care of her."

"No, no, Jeanne *petite*. Mama said no. Stay with me. I am so old and I cannot hear."

"Yes, Grandmere," Jeanne's swift kiss was on the faded wrinkled cheek, "to be sure, but I wish they would go."

More hours went by and still the soldiers poured into the house, over it, up and down, through it room by room. Still Madame

Lanier fed them until at last there came a final sharp order.

Then Jeanne remembered only confusion. With her face glued to the window, she saw men rise, grab up their guns, their belts, their packs. There was a surge toward the door. Mama was caught in it. One big arm was around her. Mama's white hand went up, then down on the face of the man who dragged her. Then his went up and down and Mama slipped to the floor. But she was caught up again and dragged out of the room—out of sight.

Jeanne screamed, but she was not heard. She ran up the steps and pulled at the door but it was locked. Then Grandmere was suddenly by her side, panting and trembling but strangely strong.

“No, no, Jeanne!” she cried sharply. “You must not go in there yet. Wait! Wait! till they go. Then we will steal in the cellar and up and help Mama. They cannot take her far. They must march and fight. They will drop her at the door.”

They clutched each other and waited there, one so old, the other so young, till all had left

the house and marched away up the street. Then in the darkness they stole to the cellar, over broken bottles, up dirty stairs to the floor above. Through all the rooms down-stairs they hunted and at last went out in the darkness to the street. Ah, yes. There Mama lay by the door, her face a white splash in the gloom, except for one dark stain on her forehead.

Grandmere and Jeanne stooped down to her and over Jeanne crept a strange chill.

“She does not move, Grandmere,” she whispered piteously, all her fiery courage gone. “She does not speak to us.”

Grandmere straightened her old stooped back and passed a trembling hand over her forehead. Then she sat down on the ground.

“Jeanne, come here,” she said at last. “Come here, dear.”

And Jeanne, dirty, tired, frightened, with some of the beauty of youth wiped from her face, stood at her Grandmere’s knee.

“Mama has gone to be with dear, brave, laughing Papa. The Germans have sent them both to heaven. We need not be afraid for

her any more, Jeanne, Jeanne—*ma cherie—ma petite*—”

And now it was time for eighty-nine to take care of fourteen, for to Jeanne had come the end of the world.

## CHAPTER II

### A TRUE DAUGHTER OF FRANCE

As they sat sobbing and trembling they heard a dull roar.

“What is that, Grandmere?” Jeanne cried.

Grandmere shook her head. “I heard nothing.”

There followed another, nearer. Then flames that rose to the sky.

“Oh! I heard that,” Grandmere cried.

“Houses!” Jeanne whispered. “They are blowing up houses! and burning!”

“Let me think, Jeanne,” Grandmere quavered. “We must hide. They will find us in a moment. Ah! The best place is the cellar. Hurry, Jeanne. Back to the little cellar—the store closet. It is not right under the house. To one side it is. Come!”

“But—Mama! Must we leave her here?”

Grandmere nodded her head, and as they hurried back into the house there was another roar that rattled the windows.

With it came a flare of anger to Jeanne and hand in hand with that a flare of courage.

“Oh! Oh!” she cried, stamping her foot. “Oh! Oh! Grandmère dear! How you tremble. Let me help you. Here, this way.”

They were passing through the kitchen where so shortly before a meal had been in progress. The sight of food reminded Jeanne that she and Grandmère had had no dinner.

“I’m hungry!” Jeanne cried, and she caught up a great platter of meat, a loaf of bread and some butter.

“Hurry! dear, hurry,” Grandmère begged at the cellar-stair door.

“And a candle! It will be dark!” Jeanne whispered to herself. In the rush of their flight and fright the bigger loss of Mama loomed indistinct.

Then they went down the dirty stairs again; over broken glass to the little store closet, which had of course been burst open. The floor was wet and slippery. There was no window. It was deep and dark and cold, but it was safe, for it was not connected with the house except by the big door that Jeanne pulled shut and bolted behind her.

It was only a few moments after that, though it seemed more nearly hours, that they heard a sharp voice over their heads, the running of feet through the house; then silence; then suddenly—

All the world must be flying apart and crashing about their ears, Jeanne was sure. She and Grandmère were thrown flat and glass fell and broke about them; the noise seemed to burst their heads open and the door—the great heavy door—flew suddenly out and disappeared in pieces.

The rest of that night was a terrible dream. Grandmère and Jeanne clung and huddled till the noise and roar ceased. Then they cleared their eyes and nose and mouth of dust as best they could; brushed away the broken glass from their clothes and hair, and cleaned a small space where they might sit. The candle had gone out but Jeanne had a few matches and managed to light it again. It gave little light but the wreck that they saw through the gaping black hole frightened them so they were glad they could not see more. They had only their hands to work with, and Jeanne would not let Grandmère touch a thing.

“No, no, Grandmere. I am your brave boy, you know. Mama said so. I am to take care of you. Here—here is a clear place, not quite so wet. Now sit here and eat this bit of meat and bread.”

So hand in hand they sat through the black night, the young one growing older with the terror and bitterness of her experience, the old one growing younger for a while because Jeanne’s youth necessitated protection.

The first peep of dawn came and they crept to the gap in the wall. Before them lay the wreck of their home. Nothing was recognizable except a bit of a bed that stuck up out of the rubbish and timber and stone and ashes.

“There’s my own little white bed,” Jeanne whispered though the stillness hurt their ears.

“We cannot get out,” Grandmere quavered, feeling suddenly old again. Her limbs trembled; she grew dizzy and Jeanne helped her back to the cleared space. For a few minutes Grandmere with her head on Jeanne’s shoulder knew nothing and for one of those minutes Jeanne knew fear. Then she began to think.

When at last Grandmere stirred, Jeanne

held some grape juice from a jagged bottle to her lips and Grandmère sat up.

“Listen, Grandmère,” Jeanne said. “I’ve thought it all out. We cannot get out yet. I will have to dig a way.” She laughed shakily for the first time in a long while and a deep dimple appeared at the corner of her mouth. “How glad I am that I have on boy’s clothes!” she cried, “and these big boots! They will kick us clear in no time. But listen, we cannot even try to get out yet. For where to go when we do? We cannot go that way for we will meet more Germans coming. Nor can we follow them—I—should be afraid.”

“We must go to Father Renard’s,” Grandmère sighed. “He will take care of us.”

“If we can find him—and if his house isn’t blown up too.”

“Then to the church,” Grandmère said feebly. “Everyone will go to the church.”

“I never thought of that, to be sure.”

So with their plans laid they made the best of things. Already Jeanne’s courage was coming back; though Grandmère grew feebler; though their hole was filthy; though Mama was killed; though their food was nearly gone and

the candle quite burned out. At any rate the Germans were gone.

In two days when all the wreckage had settled, Jeanne began her work. Her white hands, no longer white, pulled and tussled with debris; her heavy boots pushed and kicked, and after two more days' labor there was a rude and dangerous pathway up from the ruins to the earth above.

But Grandmère was sick—and Jeanne was stiff and bleeding and bruised and sore, so they delayed their going. In two more days not a bit of food was left, and only a few drops of grape juice. Jeanne leaned over her Grandmère and spoke to her loudly.

“I must go out to-day and look for food. I will be back soon.”

“No, Jeanne. No! No!” Grandmère protested weakly, but Jeanne pulled her cap down over her curls that were no longer gold but dusty and dirty and caked and snarled, and clambered up out of the wreck of their home.

Once upright she gazed around in a stupor; then gasped. Not a house in all Bellebois was left standing; not a tree; not the church; even

the road was destroyed and great holes gaped like mouths laughing. Jeanne did not believe her eyes. She and Grandmère must have been blown somewhere else.

Then she felt suddenly sick and weak. What could they do? What could they do? There was nothing. There was nobody. There was no sound, not even a bird. The stillness startled her. She began trembling.

Then of a sudden, up out of a hole next her came a figure. Jeanne waited, huddled against a rock to see who it was. Who could it be? Was it, was it — Oh!

“Madame Dupigny!” she cried, and flew suddenly to her neighbor.

Madame Dupigny stooped and stared into the face of the little figure, clinging wildly to her skirts and crying—crying—crying.

“Jeanne?” she cried wonderingly. “Not Jeanne Lanier?”

“*Oui! Oui!*” Jeanne sobbed and then the two of them told their stories. Madame Dupigny had just her baby left. Little Antoinette had been lost—Grandmère buried in the ruins. Yes, they had a bit of cheese and a potato or two.

“Oh! Could you spare some? Just a bite? Not for me,” Jeanne cried, “for Grand-mere!”

In the end Madame Dupigny left her baby in her cellar and with Jeanne, they half dragged, half carried poor fainting old Grand-mere up the rough walk to the earth, then down to Madame Dupigny’s cellar or what was left of it. It was cleaner and bigger and lighter. The floor was dry. Madame Dupigny had been able to catch some rain water which she gave to Grandmère to drink; then she took off her underskirt and rolled it up for a pillow for the old lady’s head. Jeanne held the baby all the time.

“Oh, it is *bon*—good—to have help,” Jeanne murmured, lifting her beautiful brown eyes to her neighbor’s gratefully.

“Except for your eyes, child, I should not have known you.”

Then began a week of animal living. Jeanne made no complaint. Only once, as she viewed her broken nails and blistered hands, into the cracks of which the dirt had been ground deep; and as she saw in the daylight her sticky, dirty clothes, spotted and stained

and soiled as she had never seen clothes before, only that once did she shudder and sigh:

“If I could take a bath.”

Then she glimpsed Madame Dupigny’s strained, anxious face bending over her waxy baby, whose cries were so feeble, whose movements so weak, and Jeanne shut her pale lips firmly and thought to herself:

“To live, that is the main thing, to live and keep living.”

As the days went by, they and others of the ruined village grew bolder. They ventured out of their holes and found there were fourteen in all; three more old women, two more mothers like Madame Dupigny with two babies, and three other children. They were all peasant folk but Jeanne and Madame Dupigny forgot that and everyone helped everyone else.

One had an old pot in which they took turns cooking snail soup or potato stew with potatoes dug by their bare hands from the fields. So each family had one hot meal a day. The water was rain water caught at night, and when it did not rain, they scooped it from hollows in the ground or in the rocks and saved it

carefully. Jeanne made many trips back to her cellar with the three other children and they brought out the broken bottles that they might use for cups.

One other woman had taken her goat with her to her cellar. This milk saved the lives of two of the babies and Jeanne's Grandmère. One precious bottle of grape juice, found whole in the darkest corner of the shelves, was kept for an emergency.

On some days at the fire when the stew or soup was cooking Jeanne would dry and warm hers and Grandmère's clothes. Though she shuddered to get into hers again, there was nothing else to be done. As it was she thought thankfully to herself how wise Mama had been to put her in overalls and boots. There would have been nothing left of her dress and slippers had she worn them.

So the days crept by and the baby and Grandmère grew weaker and weaker. The baby hardly cried at all now and Grandmère made no attempt to talk or move. Jeanne and Madame Dupigny grew big-eyed but no tears came. Tears did no good.

At last one day when Jeanne was digging a

potato in the field near by she flung up her head and listened.

“Hark! Jules!” she cried to the boy near her. “Do you not hear the tramp of feet?”

Jules’ face grew white as he nodded his head. Then, swift as deer despite their faintness, they ran from cellar to cellar and warned all those within to stay in hiding.

“What is it, Jeanne?” Madame Dupigny cried in alarm, as Jeanne dropped breathless in the cellar behind her.

“They are coming! The Boches are coming back again!” Jeanne whispered. “What can they want? There’s nothing left to do!”

Madame Dupigny seized Jeanne’s arm.

“How do you know?” she cried sharply.

“We heard them and saw the cloud of dust. Hark! Do you hear?”

They listened, and steadily, surely came the sound of marching feet. The Germans were coming back.

## CHAPTER III

### RESCUE

THERE was a faint hope in Madame Dupigny's heart that it might be the French, but she said nothing. Instead she strained her eyes for a glimpse of them in the distance, and at last made out the dreaded gray mass.

Yes, the Germans were coming back.

In dumb terror they crept to the darkest corner of their hole and waited. For hours and hours, it seemed, they waited, and at last, close to them,—oh, so fearfully close,—passed the Germans, retreating.

Madame Dupigny first sensed this, and grasped Jeanne's arm, her eyes alight.

"They are retreating. Hark! How they march! So tired and no noise, no shouts. It must be that our poilus are driving them."

Jeanne held her breath, then nodded and her eyes caught fire too.

The gray line unwound slowly. Those huddled in the cellars hardly moved as the men

swung by. Once the baby cried but Madame Dupigny hushed it. Once Grandmere muttered in delirium but Jeanne was there to quiet her.

Hours and hours dragged by until at last they had gone,—everyone. Even then Jeanne and Madame Dupigny sat silent, frozen, unbelieving. When at last they spoke it was in a whisper.

“They’ve gone!” Jeanne gasped.

“Driven back!” Madame Dupigny cried. “The French will be coming soon. Oh! Soon the poilus will be here to save us!”

So existence became brighter and the potato stew was no longer sickening. When once Jeanne found a stray hen,—bewildered and draggled and weak,—and two eggs, there was a celebration. That was two days after the Boches had passed. As they finished their supper of eggs,—the first supper they had had in a week,—they heard the tramp of feet again.

To be sure of safety they scuttled to their holes like rats, but Jeanne peered into the twilight until she saw at last the beloved blue of their countrymen. Then with a shout, out she scrambled,—she and Madame Dupigny and all

the rest except Jeanne's Grandmère,—and waved and waved and waved to the brave, tired, dirty soldiers marching stolidly by.

For the first time in weeks there were faint smiles; for the first time in weeks there was hope fluttering in their hearts and eyes; for the first time in weeks they drew deep breaths of relief. The Germans had gone. The French were chasing them. Everything was all right. *Le bon Dieu*,—the good God—was still in His heaven.

An officer stepped from the line and approached Madame Dupigny.

"You have suffered," he said, and his stern face grew tender as his eyes rested on Jeanne. In spite of her dirt and thinness, her refined beauty still shone. "But we have come and Paris is saved. Following us will soon appear the American Red Cross. They will help you."

At his words Jeanne remembered for the first time the slip of paper her mother had thrust in the pocket of her blouse. She was to go to America to friends of her father's. She had been so absorbed by the present she had not thought of the future except as it came,

hour by hour. She thrust her hand in her pocket to pull out the scrap and read the name.

It was gone!

Her sharp cry and look of dismay startled Madame Dupigny. With a nod of farewell to the officer she turned to Jeanne.

“What is it, *petite*? What troubles you?”

So Jeanne explained, and Madame Dupigny looked sober. But quickly she said:

“Never mind. It does not matter. You have not the money for the trip, have you? At any rate you must stay with me until we can plan. I will help you, and you me. See, Jeanne, little Pierre knows these are Frenchmen. He smiles a little—oh, a little,—as they pass.”

So another day went by, and another, each better than the last, for hope was with them. Once a bird sang. They could not find it but it was enough to hear it. It stirred something in Jeanne’s heavy heart that had not stirred for weeks.

“I can breathe better,” she said to Madame Dupigny, laying her rough little hand on her heart. “Since I heard that bird I can breathe better.”

Madame Dupigny nodded, though her own heart was heavier than ever, for little Pierre was scarcely breathing at all and Grandmère lay as in a stupor.

On the third day came the big Red Cross ambulance. In it were beds for sick people, medicine, food; Jeanne and her Grandmère were taken, and also the other two old women and the three children. There was no room for more, but the good Americans promised to send another back for those left, at once. They kept their word but Madame Dupigny and her baby were taken to another place. Jeanne never saw them again.

She sat huddled up on the bed beside Grandmère, and watched with big eyes as the white-garbed doctor gave her medicine. There were two in the car and Jeanne liked them at once, especially the brown one with the steel blue eyes. As she watched them giving out food and medicine she heard the brown one murmur to the other in English:

“She will not last long.”

“You mean Grandmère?” Jeanne asked with startled eyes.

The doctors were amazed.

"How do you happen to speak English?" the brown one asked.

"My father was an American," she explained simply, with her quaint accent. "I was born in America. Since seven years we lived there; then we came back here to take care of Grandmère, for she was all alone. *Mon père*—my father—always talked English to me."

"What is your name?" the brown doctor who was helping Grandmère asked.

"Jean Lanier," Jeanne answered giving the boy's name.

"Lanier is French."

"Oh, yes, *mon père* was of French blood. All his people were. That's why he went so gladly to fight the Boches."

"Where is he now?" the doctor asked abruptly.

"He was killed right away and Mama—she too. Now you say Grandmère will not live. Is it true?"

"She is very old and feeble and she must have been through a lot," he replied evasively.

"Oh, yes!" Jeanne nodded, her eyes still questioning.

"It is hard for old people to withstand such a shock. Have you nobody else?"

"Nobody," Jeanne replied.

"Friends in America?" he queried.

Jeanne shook her head.

"I don't know anybody in America," she replied.

"Well, never mind," he said cheerily. "Americans are looking for just such little shavers as you. You'll be taken care of."

"Little what?" Jeanne asked.

"Shavers! Chaps!" he explained. "Little boys. Americans are adopting them as fast as they can. I'll give your name to the committee. What did you say it was?"

"Jeanne—Jean Lanier," she corrected herself.

"Happen to know the chairman of the committee for the adoption of refugees, where we're going," the doctor explained to his co-worker. "This boy is—well,—how old are you?" He turned back abruptly to Jeanne, taking out a note-book.

"Fourteen," she answered. "Where are we going now?" she asked in turn.

"To a relief camp in Holland," he replied

as he finished writing and put his book back in his pocket. Then he leaned over and gave Grandmère another drink.

"Well, don't you worry, Johnny, my boy. You will be adopted by ten people. I'll bet my hat. Anybody that can talk English as well as French will be snapped up like a hot cake."

So Jeanne, though she could not understand all he said, was comforted somewhat all that long weary day and night. For they travelled for sixteen hours, through country flat and desolate like theirs they had left; past ruined villages; around uprooted trees and great shell holes in the road, on and on and on—bumping and jolting—but always leaving farther behind them the misery and squalor and meagre existence of which Jeanne was so weary.

She ate ravenously when they gave her food. Then she curled up on a bed by Grandmère and fell asleep. As she lay, one hand tucked up under her cheek, the two doctors talked about her in low tones.

"I'm going to get Mrs. DuPont to give his name to my aunt," the brown doctor said. "I'll stick in a note myself if I get time. The

kid is darned attractive,—with his pluck,—and delicate too. He can't stand the rough life too long. Look at those lashes. Gosh! They're too long for a boy."

"Who's your aunt, Jack?" the other doctor asked, lighting a cigarette.

"Aunt Beatrice Stafford. She's a winner. Loads of money—a widow—no children—big-hearted. She sent Dad the money for me to come over. Knew I was crazy to. I'd never have left Montana if it hadn't been for her."

"How long ago did you get your degree?"

"June," Dr. Jack Kent made answer. "I was just wondering whether to interne or start out for myself when pop comes the war and here I am."

His keen blue eyes rested again on Jeanne.

"Poor kid, he must have the French fighting blood, all right. He's seen his mother killed and the old lady won't last long."

He brushed his strong brown hand back over his crisp wavy hair and drew his heavy brows together.

"This war is just beginning, old man," he said. "Whatever little bit we do won't be a drop in the bucket; but it'll help. I'm going

to begin with that kid. Guess I'll write a note now to Aunt Bee. Mrs. DuPont will mail it with the particulars."

So as the big Red Cross ambulance lurched and lumbered over the uneven ground, and as Jeanne, unconscious of the good forces at work for her already, slept, Jack Kent bent his alert young face over a bit of paper snatched from his note-book.

"Dear Aunt Bee," he scrawled.

"Have just stumbled across the sweetest little chap ever. An orphan. Bringing him out of the ruins now. He speaks English like a veteran. His father was an American. Good blood, I should judge, by the looks, and full of pluck. You told me to keep my eyes open for a kiddy for you. Well, I think he's the one, though I know you'd rather have a girl. Madame DuPont will take a picture when he's washed and dressed properly and you'll have a fairer chance to decide. In the meantime do write him. His name and address follows ——"

He finished his letter, thrust it into his pocket, sighed with relief and glanced at his little charge. To his dismay he found her big

eyes fastened on him and a deep twinkle lurking in their brown depths. Suddenly a dimple appeared at the corner of her mouth, a laugh spilled out. It transformed her face. From the haunting sweet sadness there was a swift change to irresponsible joy. It made him think of sunshine passing swiftly over a shadowed mountain.

“What’s the joke, kid?” he queried.

“You were so vairy funny,” she explained, trying to hold back the dimple, “twisting your tongue and wetting your pencil like a small boy at school. Is it then so difficult for you to compose a letter?”

Her face changed again as suddenly, at a little gasp from Grandmere. Dr. Kent bent swiftly over her, but there was nothing he could do. There was a fluttering breath, a sigh, and Grandmere had slipped away to heaven. Jeanne was alone in the wide world.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CABLEGRAM

JEANNE wanted to cry. She was so tired, so lonely, and yes—a little frightened.

Then Mama's words came back to her.

"You are to be brave. Do not cry. Remember you are a daughter of France."

So she set her lips in the firm determined way she had learned and listened to Dr. Kent's words.

"It was better so, my boy." His hand rested in brotherly fashion on Jeanne's shoulder. "You must be glad she has left her suffering. It is better where we are going but still very hard for the weak and old. Can't you sleep a bit, old chap?"

Something comradely about his manner roused Jeanne's ebbing courage. She brushed back a big tear and flung up her head.

"I shall not cry," she said fiercely. "I shall not cry. Grandmère and Mama and Papa are all together. They can take care of her better than I."

The quaint thought made the two doctors stare but Jeanne went on unnoticed.

"I do not think I can sleep, but I will try. There is nothing else to do."

And she wedged her small self on a cot with the three other children and closed her eyes. Immediately, however, they flew open.

"You are quite sure, Doctaire Jack," she pronounced it softly like Zhack, "quite sure that some good American will want me?"

"Very sure," he said gravely, puffing hard at his pipe.

"*Eh, bien, I hope so,*" she sighed and shut her eyes again just in time to hide two big tears.

Soon, however, the motion of the ambulance became smoother, and as darkness fell and relief from exhaustion set in, sleep came to little Jeanne. It was a troubled sleep, to be sure, in which she jumped and trembled and cried aloud, and the red began to burn in her cheeks and she coughed until "Dr. Zhack," as she called him, watched her with a critical eye. All night long she slept, and the other three children with her, and when she opened her eyes in the morning she was in a new world.

She stared and stared about her, for she saw trees; trees and grass and flowers and windmills and people,—well-dressed people. And there were goats and chickens and voices calling and shouting. Her eyes grew brighter and her cheeks pinker, and Dr. Jack, watching her, squinted his eyes into two shining specks.

“Where are we?” Jeanne whispered, then her hand flew to her throat.

“Throat hurt?” Dr. Jack asked cheerfully, feeling for his medicine kit. “All righty. I’ll fix that in a jiff. How does this sound to you?” he went on, lifting her head and pouring some horrid medicine in her mouth. Jeanne swallowed bravely though it hurt, oh! like pins and needles. “How does this sound? A bath—a warm bath—then clean clothes,—then perhaps a cot. Hey?”

Jeanne’s eyes questioned the truth of such wonders.

“That’s what happens next. Then a bit of hot soup —— Well! Here we are.”

The ambulance swerved suddenly into a park-like place. Jeanne peering out eagerly saw tents, rows and rows of them, in front of which stepped young-old children, and before

which in the sunshine, with some sort of work in their hands, listlessly sat men and women.

They looked up as the big car rattled by, and Jeanne noticed they all had the same despairing look that she had grown used to.

"Their homes are blown up, too," she thought, "but they have food here—and dryness—and clothes. It is better than back there."

Suddenly a faintness came over her, then blackness, and she knew nothing more until she was in a cool clean bed, with a cool clean feeling all over her body, and a cool clean nightgown of some kind on her.

Feeling came first, then she struggled to open her eyes, but they were so heavy. She tried and tried but she could not do it. So she gave it up and sank back into sleep again.

When she woke again it was night. This time she could open her eyes. They stared and stared about her at the long plain room she was in, at the ten or twelve white beds all around her; at the dim light in the distance, at the white woman coming toward her bed.

The nurse leaned over and put a cool hand on Jeanne's forehead.

“Feeling better?”

Jeanne closed her eyes to answer. She could not speak nor nod her head, but the nurse understood.

“That’s good. What is it? A drink of water? Just a drop then, here.”

“Doctaire Zhack?” Jeanne’s lips asked though no sound came.

“He has gone again. He’ll come back day after to-morrow. Now go to sleep so you can talk to him when he comes.”

Jeanne sighed and obeyed.

After that there were intervals of soft clean nothingness; then moments of clear pricked consciousness when she wondered and didn’t care and wondered again. And at last there came a time when her big eyes flew open to meet Dr. Jack’s steel blue ones gazing at her. A ray of sunlight shone in a stream on his crisp curls turning their darkness to a deep auburn.

“Hello!” he said in that cheerful tone of his. “You nearly fooled me but not quite,—back there in the car. I thought you weren’t a boy.”

“Your hair is not brown at all,” Jeanne sighed. “It is red. Do they all know?” she

asked weakly. "Well, it doesn't matter now, does it? I'm so far from the Germans it doesn't matter if I'm a girl again, does it?"

"Not a bit," he answered her.

"Where am I?" she asked, looking around.

"In a hospital, at least we call it that. It's a shelter at any rate. You have been here three weeks. Pretty soon you will be well enough to go out to live in a tent. How would you like that? They've got a job for you, too. Think of that! A job for a girl of fourteen. I should say you were lucky!"

"What is the—what you call—job?"

"Interpreter," he answered briefly. "There are a few French like yourself. Most of the people are Belgians. But I'll tell you about that later. Just now—can you read this?"

He held up a yellow bit of paper. It was a cablegram. Jeanne's eyes travelled swiftly over the little black letters.

"Make all arrangements for legal adoption of Jeanne Lanier. Aunt Bee."

Her brown eyes stared wide and bright at the clean-cut American face above hers.

“Your Aunt—Bee? Such a funny name!” she whispered. And for the third time in two months her dimple appeared and again Dr. Jack thought of sunshine on dark mountain tops. “She will be nice, then,” Jeanne decided.

“You bet she’s nice. Here I’ll leave this with you, then you can read it whenever the spirit moves you. I’ve got to get a hump on. Be good now.”

“You will come back?”

“In a week; good-bye.”

As he disappeared through the door Jeanne found strength to wave a thin hand—white again—or nearly so. She stared at it in amazement. And her hair—a lock had fallen on the pillow and out of the corner of her eye she saw it gleam gold.

She was clean and not hungry, and adopted. Could she wish for anything more? Most *certainement*, not. She folded her little hands, with the cablegram between them, shut her eyes and said a prayer.

“Dear *bon Dieu*. You are there, after all, taking care of me down here and Mama and Papa and Grandmere up there. Thank you.”

## CHAPTER V

### THE RIDE

DAY by day Jeanne grew better.

“I can feel little livenesses run up and down my back and legs,” she said to the nurse. “And then I stretch and more come. It is good. Soon I will walk; is it not so?”

“Yes,—perhaps next week,” the nurse made answer, propping a pillow behind Jeanne.

Jeanne was sitting up in celebration, for Dr. Jack was due to-day and she wanted him to know how finely she was getting along. Her golden hair had been trimmed evenly and hung in thick clusters of soft curls just to her ears. A faint, faint color had come to tint her pale cheeks and her great eyes glowed dark.

“What clothes shall I wear when I get up, please Ma’amselle Nurse?” she asked. She could never remember the English girl’s queer name.

“That is a riddle I cannot answer. Don’t you want your old ones back again? They are washed and look very nice.”

Jeanne made a wry face.

"Not to wear, Ma'amselle Nurse, if you please, I want to take them to Amerique when I go, to show my new Mama, but I wish to wear girl's clothes."

"You do, do you?" a hearty voice cried.  
"Well, how will these do?"

And Jeanne's Dr. Jack was there, with his brilliant smile and crispy auburn hair topping a load of boxes.

"Aunt Bee said you must not look like a war orphan any more, for you aren't one. So she told me to buy some duds. Had the deuce of a time. 'What size this' and 'what size that'—Gracious!" He mopped his forehead as he dumped the boxes on Jeanne's bed. "I just said 'peteet—peteet—peteet' toot the time."

He was working for her dimple and sure enough it came and with the spilling laugh.

"So here they are," he continued, satisfied.

Jeanne's fingers trembled as she and he tore off wrappings and the beauties lay disclosed. A beautiful blue serge dress, dainty shoes and stockings, soft white underwear,—another golden brown dress, a coat, a hat—there was no end to the pretty things.

“O-ooh!” Jeanne clasped her hands. Then her radiant face shadowed as she saw the hungry, unbelieving, wistful eyes of a girl on the bed next her.

“But is it right?—Oh, Doctaire Zhack—is it right that I should have so much and others so leetle?”

“By George,” Dr. Jack told the nurse afterward, “you could have knocked me over. The kid wouldn’t take them and wear ’em with the rest of the youngsters in the relief camp in rags. Made me take them back and bring shoes for Jules who is barefoot,—and a coat for Pierre and stockings for Nanette. Oh, yes, she knows a lot of ’em. They’ve been in to see her. What do you know about that?”

“The ugliness she has seen and lived will bring beautiful things to light,” the nurse replied wisely, and Dr. Jack nodded.

“Can’t help but like the kid better though,” he growled.

So when Jeanne began to walk around again, it was, after all, in her old boy’s clothes. They were clean, they were whole, all except the shoes. She did permit Dr. Jack to get her a pair of shoes that fitted, and stockings,

and one extravagance,—a pale yellow hair ribbon.

“I do want to look a little girl-y. Now, with these so pretty ribbon I look like Jeanne.”

She could not wait to leave the rough hospital shack. She wanted to get outdoors in the sunshine again, and the crowded quarters of the tent where she was put with a Belgian woman and six children made her happy as she had not been for weeks.

“Oh, I can do so much to help,” she cried to her faithful friend Dr. Jack on one of his weekly visits. “I can dress them and feed them and help keep them clean. And I mend. Oh! I am vairy beesy and I like it so. I do not have time for heavy pains here,” she laid her hand on her heart.

“How about your job?”

“My job.” She chopped the word in a quick way and laughed. “So very funny a word. My job—I like it. All the day whenever Madame calls me, I run to hear the stories and tell her—quick—how it is with the so tired new ones. Oh, I hear many many sad things, so much more sadder than mine.”

And Dr. Jack marvelled again at a little girl

of fourteen whose father and mother had been killed, whose home had been blown up, who had had to live for days like a rat in a hole and who had seen her grandmother suffer and die from exposure,—say that others had “more sadder stories” than hers.

“How do you explain that?” he asked.

“Oh! Don’t you see? They are not adopted. I am. They have no Dr. Zhack. I have. They have no home to go to. I have. They can have no clothes. I can—any time. When am I to go to Amerique ennahow?” she asked abruptly.

“Not till the war’s over, Jeanne,” he replied.

She looked up startled.

“Truly?” she asked.

“Truly. It is a new law that orphans cannot leave the country until the war is over.”

“And I mus’ stay here—years—maybe.” Jeanne’s eyes filled with tears. “Doctaire Zhack, what is the time of the date?”

“October 19th. Why?”

“By springtime I shall be in Amerique,” Jeanne made answer resolutely.

Dr. Jack shouted with laughter and at the sound two or three newly arrived children

scuttled in fright for the shelter of their tent near by.

“Going to make over the laws of your country, kid?”

Jeanne dimpled.

“You laugh at one so small as me, saying so big a thing, but it is so. Somehow I will. I want to see my dear new Mama. She writes me such beautiful pretty letters. Listen,” and she began to read.

“DEAR LITTLE JEANNE:

“Such a sweet name. I love it, and I love you. The little picture came and there you were in your sturdy overalls and piquant hair ribbon, smiling so happily at the cluster of babies about you. You must be busy and you look happy. I envy you your chance to help. I am enclosing a little money. Spend it for those who need it most.”

“A little!” Jeanne dropped the letter to spread her hands. “With it I bought much milk for sick babies, and rubbers, and a pipe for old grandpere and a ball for Johnette and many other things.”

“What did you get for yourself?” Dr. Jack asked.

“For myself? Nothing!” she returned surprised. “I have so much!”

“You have! What?”

“Oh—my sweet hair ribbon,” she patted its perky folds. “But you interrupt. Listen.

“—need it most.

“I wish you were here. I am planning for Christmas already, for my box must go to you so much ahead. Perhaps next Christmas we may be together. I shall not tell you what I am sending for you, but please keep some of it for yourself.

“Take care of my big nephew for me. He likes to work too hard.”

“You see?” Jeanne’s sunlight smile flashed again. “I am your—boss!”

“I see; well, then, boss me away, for I must go.”

“But I have not *fini*.”

“And I can’t wait for you to ‘feenee,’ ” he quoted her.

“And you have not yet taken me for that so long ride,” she reproached him, looking up into his face.

“I’ll take you—Thanksgiving Day.”

“I will hold you to that promise, Doctaire

Zhack. On the sixth veesit from now you will take me, yes?"

"Yes," he promised and gave her little hand a big squeeze.

All through the beautiful crisp fall Jeanne lived in the tent with the Belgian family, and soon her bright face and helpful ways made her a favorite and special concessions were made her. She could buy things in an emergency without pay because the storekeeper knew of her mama in America and that the money would come as soon as a note from Jeanne reached her. And she was allowed in the hospital, too, for her quick soothing fingers often brought relief to hot heads and another pair of deft hands was sorely needed at times. This work Jeanne loved, even more than the work with babies, and it was not long before she came to be sent for when the hospital was crowded. And the gate-keeper—though Jeanne did not always have her pass—would let her slip through with only a word and a smile; for she was always sure to return with full hands for somebody.

Yes, Jeanne in her overalls and brown woollen blouse, and yellow hair ribbon was as



“Well, How Would You Like to Get Aboard?”



happy as possible. She could keep half-way clean and she was fairly well fed and she was making others happier. And always there were letters from dear Mama, and every week a great big laugh with funny Dr. Jack. Oh, yes! It was a good world and good to be alive.

Finally came Thanksgiving Day clear and cold, with a light fall of snow over the country-side. Jeanne was up bright and early and set about her daily tasks so as to be ready when Doctaire Zhack should come to take her for the promised ride. She tidied up the tent, swept it, washed and dressed three of the six children, marshalled them in line to their breakfast and back again. This kept her so busy that the hearty American "Hello" startled her as she began to wash her own face and hands.

"Oh! Hello!" she chopped out that word, as she did "job." "I will soon be ready."

"What have you warm to wear?" Dr. Jack asked her sternly as she appeared before him a few moments later.

"These things that are on me," she replied with a sidelong glance at him.

"Jeanne Lanier," he scolded in genuine wrath, "what did you do with that sweater and

those gloves I gave you? You were to keep them especially for to-day. You will freeze. I've a good mind to leave you home."

"Oh no! Please! Doctaire! You see others needed them more. Pierre had no blouse at all—and the gloves —" she begged.

"No excuse. Now we will have to wait and get more before we start out on our ride. Come! No, not to the store. We will go into the street." His eyes snapped blue fire.

Meekly Jeanne followed him; meekly still she handed out her passport at the gate, and still meekly she climbed into the car beside Dr. Jack where he tucked her trousered self snugly in a big robe. As they started, her yellow ribbon came undone and streamed like a bright banner behind them.

Jeanne stole a glance at her friend's stern face and decided it would be better not to venture remarks just yet.

"It's all right for you to be generous, Jeanne," he began abruptly, "but it's silly to be foolish. Suppose you get sick? One more person for Madame and the nurse to care for; one more person for me to worry about; and

Aunt Bee. Don't let this happen again. Do you understand?"

"I'll try so vairy hard," Jeanne promised in a subdued voice and at her docility Jack Kent's face cleared suddenly.

"All right, kid! Here we are. Out you hop. If we had more time I'd get you a whole outfit from head to foot just for punishment. As it is, we'll only get a coat and hat and gloves."

In a few minutes Jeanne was bundled into the car again,—a queer little figure in her faded old blue overalls, smart new brown coat and fur gloves and chic hat, but she laughed merrily. She was warm, so neither she nor Dr. Jack cared how she looked.

"Where are we going?"

"To the coast. I thought you'd like to see the ocean and some of the big ships."

"Oh, I'd love that much!" Jeanne cried. "How far is it? I did not know we were so near!"

"Only a few miles," he replied. "Along a good boulevard, too. We'll be there in no time. I had to choose a short ride because I have to get back."

"So soon?" she asked, darting a look of question to him.

"I'm—I may as well tell you—I've applied for a transfer and I look for orders any time."

"A—what is it you say?"

"A transfer," he said, his mouth suddenly clamping. "I'm tired of this sissy-behind-the-lines work. I want to get to the front."

Jeanne was strangely silent at this news and after a pause he glanced down at her.

"Well, boss? What do you say to that?"

"I shall miss you," she said briefly. "It will be vairy, vairy lonesome, with no big laugh every week. I think I shall not laugh at all any more."

"Oh, come now," he began.

"But truly! Such sad things all the time to see and do and hear. Nobody laughs but you there."

Her face was shadowed and sad and old as she spoke.

"But you must go where you will do the most good, that is right. Everyone in France must go where he can do the most good."

"That's about the way I figured it out.

Women can take care of the people from devastated regions and ambulance drivers can get them. I'm a doctor. I'm going to get busy,—busier,—I mean. Well, we're nearly there. Warm enough?"

"Oh, *oui!*" she replied brightly. "How white the road is—and all the country. Snow is pretty, I think."

They had been rolling through sparsely settled and quiet land. Now they approached a bustling town where movement seemed to stir even the still air. Here there were sailor boys—American sailor boys—flocking the streets, and in answer to their greetings Jeanne sent a timid wave.

Suddenly she was thrilled to the centre of her being. She was at the ocean edge. Already she could see the blue through the side streets; and now they were turning down one and riding out on a dock where all was confusion. Boxes, bales and barrels were being rolled and tossed and stacked. Men were shouting. Others were standing by giving orders or copying addresses. And of a sudden they were stopped and they got out and walked to the dizzy edge where loomed above them,

miles above them, the great gray hull of the ship.

"Well, how would you like to get aboard and sail over to Aunt Bee?" Dr. Jack asked teasingly.

"I should so love it," she said slowly. "I should so love it, I think I should cry."

"Cry! Now wouldn't that be silly?"

She nodded soberly. Then in silence they watched the men load the last barrels and boxes on the boat, watched the quick but orderly running here and there; listened to the sharp commands, then the blast of the big whistle.

At the last minute a sailor in uniform came to the gangway dragging a youngster who looked about twelve.

"Not this time, son," he cried. "Run back to mamma. So long."

And the ragged, scrawny boy scuttled down to the dock, turned and shook a thin, dirty fist at his enemy.

"*Quelquefois—quelquefois—*" he shouted.

"Ya! *Oui!*" the sailor laughed back. "Come again!"

"What is it he was doing?" Jeanne asked.

"Putting off a stowaway," Dr. Jack made

answer. "They always try to get on and the ship is always searched at the last minute. Some do get away with it, though."

They stood watching the great ship move with slow quiet dignity away from the dock. Out in the bay it turned, then with nose pointed straight for the harbor where Jeanne glimpsed the endless blue, it began its long voyage.

## CHAPTER VI

### CHRISTMAS DAY

“THERE’s something, Doctaire Zhack, about which I wish to ask you,” Jeanne said when they had turned their faces toward home.

Dark was slowly falling on a white peaceful looking world and as trees and hills grew darker against the paling sky, cold crept up from the earth and Jeanne snuggled down into her warm robe.

“Go to it,” Jack Kent replied. “Shoot it.”

“I know nothing about how to shoot,” Jeanne answered soberly. “If I did, and were a real boy, not a make-believe one, I should go fight those Boches.”

“What’s the idea that hangs heavy on your mind?” Jack often steered her off sombre subjects for he hated to see children meant for sunshine living in shadow, as Jeanne was. So far, in spite of the awfulness of her experience, she had maintained a remarkable serenity of spirit and sweetness. But this day-by-day el-

bowing of tragedy was beginning to leave its mark and he was bothered. If she could only have been sent away to America, to new surroundings, before all the horrors and sadness became real to her! But it could not be, so Jeanne was growing an old mind and heart in a young body.

“Oh. *Oui!*” Jeanne was brought back abruptly. “It will soon be Noel’s day. My box is on its way. It is vairy likely I will be the only one to receive a box this year and I do so desire to share it with all the other children. But that is not possible, for how could Mama send gifts for over two hundred *enfants*? ”

“She couldn’t.”

“But Noel’s Day must not be forgotten,” Jeanne cried. “You must see that! This year of all years, those *enfants*—children—must smile that day! And what can I do? ”

She spread her hands and looked up at him—such a wee mite trying to give a bit of Christmas cheer to two hundred odd refugee children.

“Let me think,” Dr. Jack made answer and Jeanne settled back content. He would fix it *certainement*. Did he not always fix everything?

"I have it! Just the thing!" he cried, the next moment. "How about a community Christmas tree? Like we have in old New York."

"What is that, if you please?" Jeanne asked with interest.

"One great big tree lit up like—like—Coney Island, with stars and candles and things hung all over it and shiny gold stuff—you know."

"Yes!" Jeanne cried eagerly. "You have tapped the nail on the nose! Is not that good American?" she asked proudly.

"Splendid," he laughed, but she rushed on.

"One grand, beeg tree in the centre of camp, in an open space, and all the children invited. Oh! Could there not be a gift—a vairy leetle gift for each?"

"Let me think!" he made answer again, and again Jeanne settled back contentedly to wait. "Why sure! Two squares of chocolate apiece, why not?"

"Good!" Jeanne cried. "Doctaire Zhack! How you think!" she ended in admiration. "Will you be here to help me get those things?"

“Can’t say, little one, but I’ll make all arrangements with Jewels at the corner. He’s the guy to go to. And he’ll deliver the goods P. D. Q. O. K. on Christmas Day. See if he doesn’t—or my name’s Dennis. Don’t you worry.”

“I understand so leetle of what you say,” Jeanne’s forehead was puckered in her attempt to follow him. “But worry I will not, most assuredly. I have only to wish—and presto! I have a new Mama—new clothes—Christmas trees—everything!”

As it turned out Dr. Jack Kent received his transfer for work at the front within the next week. Jeanne did not see him again. She was bitterly disappointed at not having a farewell with him, and for days after his departure she was a forlorn and heartsick little girl. Her joyousness was gone and her face, so sad and old for one so young, was no longer transfigured by her sunlight smile. Those of the shifting population who had come to know her asked her if she was sick.

“Only here,” she would reply, laying her hand on her heart. “I can with difficulty pull a breath past it.”

However her plans for a small bit of Christmas joy soon absorbed her, and she with Madame DuPont and the nurse trimmed the Christmas tree themselves, in great secrecy, Christmas Eve. Stacked under it were four mounds of equal sized packages, small, but bright with their tinsel coverings and bits of red ribbon.

"Oh, it is perfect! It is beautiful!" Jeanne stood back and surveyed it with clasped hands. "Now I can with happiness open the box chere Mama sent to me, but I will not open it in my tent. No—that makes the little ones so hungry-eyed. If I may, I will bring it to you?"

"Surely, Jeanne," Madame DuPont made reply. "In my room, we three will open our boxes from home and enjoy ourselves for a while."

So back to her tent Jeanne flew and pulled out the big box from under her bumpy mattress. Tiptoeing so as not to waken the sleeping family, she hurried back to the little bare room connected with the hospital which was, Madame DuPont's only privacy.

She and the nurse were already opening

theirs and Jeanne, with eyes alight and quivering fingers, flew at the string and paper around hers.

“Oh! Oh!” she cried on her knees before it as she threw off the cover. “See! My friends! See! So many many! Soap! and the cunning box to hold it! And a hair brush and comb,—Mama never knew till lately that I had none,—and little scissors and all the little things to fix my hands and be a lady. I do not like to be a boy,” she made a quick confidence. “But see! Mama has played a joke on me. She knew I would not wear the pretty dresses so she sends me another pair of overalls. It is good. Daylight peeps through at me already in these that I wear, and behold! the warm underclothes—six! oh! I shall keep one and the rest ——”

“Now, Jeanne,” the nurse cried, knowing Jeanne’s failing, “those are all yours. You must not give any away.”

“But I have not twelve legs!” Jeanne cried. “And to keep them till those wear out! Non! That’s wicked. I keep one set only and the sweater and shoes. The rest, my roommates, as Doctaire Zhack says, shall have.”

Christmas Day dawned like any other day for all those in the relief camp. There was the same shivering in the air till the blood started; the same meagre breakfast procured in line or cooked before a fire in front of the tents; the same dreary routine of tent cleaning and pretense at basketry; the same dull watching of passers-by; the same feeble crying of children and curses of men.

So the day wore by.

But at dark the inhabitants were roused from their lethargy by a mysterious excitement in the air. Word was passed to assemble at the open space by the hospital door and, wondering, hoping for they knew not what, they all began straggling forward.

Once there the children were pushed to the front of the semicircle and all eyes strained through the gloom to see what could be behind the white sheet that hung before them.

Of a sudden Jeanne's little voice was heard.

“Now! Madame DuPont! Now is the moment! Quick!”

Down fell the sheet and on blinked the hundreds of tiny colored lights that festooned the

big Christmas tree before the startled crowd's gaze.

There was a gasp from the youngsters and that was Jeanne's thanks. Smiling she went from group to group.

"Is it not *jolie?*" she cried. "Is it not most beautiful? And see at the top! An angel! She brings you hope!"

This brought tears and sobs to many desolate war-weary women,—tears that spelled relief from the strain of composure, and Jeanne was instant sympathy for those she knew. Then she looked at the children. Not a smile in all their dull, frightened, eager, astonished little faces. Not a smile—just amazement at seeing something pretty once again.

Jeanne was heartsick, then she spun to the tree and with her golden curls gleaming and her beautiful eyes like stars, she called to those old little youngsters:

"See! My children! See! Noel did not forget you. There is a *petite* gift for all. Here! *Voila!* Catch!"

And she began throwing the shining bits of chocolate to them.

For a space there was no movement. Then

slowly they understood and as the bright bon-bons pattered down on their heads they stooped to gather them up, turning to their neighbors to be sure each had one.

And behold! There came little smiles; timid, teary, wistful, happy, swift-vanishing smiles.

## CHAPTER VII

### ORDERS

AFTER Christmas life in the relief camp became joyless to Jeanne. In the first place her scantily clothed, ill nourished, thin little body suffered tortures from the cold. Their tent had no wooden floor as had many, and at night Jeanne huddled herself into a ball and tried to sleep and could not, for the cold—the dreadful cold.

In the daytime it was a little better. One could move, and there was sometimes sunshine—and always something to do for someone, so that one's own troubles were forgotten.

Then, too, no word had come from Dr. Jack. Daily Jeanne hoped and prayed for a line or two but nothing came, and her loving, loyal little heart was filled with terrible fears. She did not know what the front was like exactly—but she knew what it did to people, and she was afraid. She tried to fancy how it would be to

hear roarings and crashings all the time such as she had heard for two nights in her little home town—and then she shuddered. But the doctor was hearing it.

So she became thinner, and her eyes bigger until at last the nurse began making her drink a little precious milk every day. This she had a chance to do, for Jeanne's refuge was the hospital. Day after day she was there with the exhausted old women and pathetic fleshless yellow shapes that were babies.

"If you do not drink this you will be sick and cannot help me any more—and I must turn from these people to help you," the nurse would say.

So Jeanne, fearing to become an added burden, would drink.

It was fortunate for the lonely little girl that she had made real friends of these two good people, Madame DuPont and the nurse. Otherwise it would have gone hard with her, for no other family could lift itself from its own troubles to lighten anyone else's. But there came a time when even these two could not help her solve a big problem that came to her.

For "orders" had come to the relief camp,—orders to evacuate.

Jeanne never knew whence these orders came, but early in March, when mud was knee-deep in the narrow streets between the tents, and living was more intolerable than with the cold of winter,—for rain was always making still more mud,—at this time came the orders.

"But why, Madame?" Jeanne asked her indignant friend, bewildered.

"Why? You ask me why? How do I know? These stupid things that happen! Perhaps it is that the Duchess of something has decided to turn this into a hospital and sanitorium for the blind. This place that we have only just now made livable,—where we have worked and worked,—we are now to depart from. Oh! Yes! It is a splendid thing for the blind soldiers. They need it. This place will be a park and here they will learn trades and have amusements. But we—what are we to do? Tell me that?"

"You tell me!" Jeanne said.

Madame spread her hands.

"Some go here—some go there—as best they can. They must move on, bag and bag-

gage, and they so tired, so old,—and just beginning to be a little happy once again.”

Jeanne left her and wandered away to think.

Where would she go? With whom? What for? She did not know. A desperate, desolate feeling nearly overwhelmed her, then she fought it back with upflung head.

“I am to be brave whatever happens,” she thought. “But I do wish Doctaire Zhack were here. I do not want to wander about here and there. I want to go to America to my new Mama. Why will they not let me?”

Of a sudden a picture flashed before her eyes,—a picture of a great ship just ready to sail and a gangway down which came a scrawny boy. Then Dr. Jack’s words came back to her.

“He’s putting off a stowaway. The ship is always searched the last minute. Some do get away with it though.”

Jeanne stood still as the immensity of the thought filled her.

“If I could!” she breathed. “And why not? It will be one mouth less for Holland to fill. No one will miss me. No one will care. I do so little good, nothing that others cannot

do in one-half the time. I take up a bed much needed by someone else. Yes, I will go."

Then she laughed aloud the little spilling laugh that she had not made for months.

"Did I not say it would be so to Dr. Jack? 'By the springtime I will be in America!' I will! I will!"

Her determination strengthened with the days, and she began to lay careful plans accordingly. She would stay until the day of evacuation, then she would straggle out with the others, with her little pack under her arm.

Her pack! That was food for much thought. Of course her coat and hat and gloves that Dr. Jack had bought her Thanksgiving Day she could not take. She managed to exchange these with an eager girl her size for an old extra blouse, an old cap, a pair of stockings and worn mittens. And her hair she must cut short again; and her hair ribbon must be dispensed with. Also her manicure set. In the end she kept rolled inside her old overalls a change of underwear, the brush and comb and two precious handkerchiefs. The extra blouse she wore under her sweater for warmth, and the cap she pulled snugly over her short hair.

It was a sad day indeed toward the end of March when the camp began to disgorge its load of stricken humanity. As if in sympathy for their sorry estate the world was weeping with them and the rain came down in a steady, persistent, penetrating drizzle.

That made no difference. The day was set and go they must. With bundles on heads, old folk and young folk trundled in wheelbarrows, with a chill in their hearts that froze all tears, these homeless people began their forward march to another place that must do for home.

Jeanne went with the rest. The rain did not soak through her sweater and two blouses but it soon soaked through her thin worn boots. She could hear it sucking around under her feet as she walked.

And the mud! The sticky, filthy mud! Jeanne grit her teeth and hauled her weary feet in and out and plodded on. At first she kept with the Belgian family she had lived with, but gradually she let them slip ahead of her. They did not notice. They did not care. Their misery was too great. Six little ones to help along this awful road for miles!

Soon Jeanne slipped out of the line to tie her shoe-lace, then to rest, then to rest again, until she found a chance to hide behind a big tree while the final stragglers struggled by. At last she was alone! And nobody would miss her!

Her heart began beating furiously with excitement, and her courage flowed back so strongly that she forgot muddy wet feet, and retraced her steps back—back—until she came to the crossroads. Ah! Here it was! The shining white boulevard she and Dr. Jack had travelled over so swiftly so many months before.

As she walked she began to be glad. In the first place there was no mud,—of course, some,—but not to one's knees as before. And in the second place there was a short note from Dr. Jack in the pocket of her blouse. She felt it crinkle and crackle as she put her hand on it. It had come yesterday, and it read:

“ DEAR JEANNE:

“ Have written twice, but in case they didn't go through, will send this. Am back a way for a rest. I've been doing work,—real work,—God's work for God's finest men. Give

my love to Aunt Bee when you write. Tell her I'm O. K. Be good. When are you going to America?

“JACK KENT.”

“He does not know that even now I am going. Oh! But I am glad he is safe.”

But the third reason that made her happy enough to ignore weariness and discomfort was the thought that she was at last going to America. That she might fail never entered her head. She must not fail. She had no other place to go. Surely so little a person as she could hide in that great big ship.

So mile after mile she plodded on. The drizzle turned to a steady rain and in time it soaked through the neck of her wool sweater and two blouses and began to trickle down Jeanne's back. The gladness dulled a bit, and finally resolved itself into a grim determination.

She looked around. Where was she? Oh, yes! She remembered that funny fence and the lopsided house. About half the distance was covered, and six miles more to go.

She began to wonder if a boat would be there all ready to go or if she would have to wait

days, maybe. She had only a little food, not enough to last long, and some she must eat now for she was weak and faint with hunger.

She sat herself down on a rock, under a tree where the rain came through less easily and pulled a bit of bread and a few dry prunes from her pocket. Both were wet through, but that was as well, for then the thirst would not drive her crazy.

When she got up she was so stiff and tired she nearly fell, but she caught herself and exerted her will to its utmost and struggled on.

It seemed to take her twice as long to walk the last few miles and to reach the bustling town, but with head bent she stuck at it until at last—at last—she came to the side street down which she and Dr. Jack had ridden.

And was she dreaming? No! For there, through the mist and the rain loomed the great hull of a steamer!

It was waiting for her—waiting to take Jeanne to America.

## CHAPTER VIII

### A JOURNEY BEGUN

ALTHOUGH it was not dusk, the rain and clouded sky made the day's ending seem near at hand. Jeanne was thankful for this. Perhaps in the dark she could run up the gangway without being seen, and lie down and hide. That would be good—oh, very good; for she was tired.

She stood at a distance from the busy men. She was pretty sure by the familiar activity that the time for sailing was near at hand. How lucky she was! In her excitement she forgot to mind the wet and the aches and the hunger and her heart beat high with anticipation. The next instant she was so frightened she felt like one big hole.

For a hand had grasped her by the shoulder and jerked her to one side.

“Look out there, sonny! Can't you see?”

She looked up into the face of an officer as a load of boxes was trundled by her so close as nearly to touch her foot.

"Oh, thank you!" she murmured in French.

"What you waiting for?" he asked suspiciously, seeing her ragged, wet appearance. "A free ride? Nothing doing. Better move on," he continued, waving her away with both hands. "*Voila! Desappearez-vous.*"

Jeanne almost laughed at his ridiculous French, but her terror soon drove away that desire. She was suspected already. Quickly she decided to leave the dock for a while, so she went away down the side street, waited a few moments, then stole back again and peered around.

The officer was gone,—and most of the men. She caught her lip between her teeth and began to make her way toward the ship. Almost all the time she could slip from one box or barrel to another but close to the foot of the gangway stood a group of sailors. Should she try to get past them? Or should she wait? It was a terrible risk to take if she ventured to dodge past them,—and yet—and yet —

Suddenly a whistle blew and the group dispersed running in various directions. Two or three strode up the shiny wet gangway and quick as a flash Jeanne slipped from her hid-

ing-place and stole like a shadow behind them. It was now nearly dark, but on deck things seemed lighter. Jeanne threw a hasty glance around then quickly ducked behind a huge coil and held her breath. The sailors passed and their footsteps soon died away. She was safe.

For a long five minutes she held herself rigid, curled uncomfortably on the deck behind the coiled rope, shivering with cold and fright and excitement.

"Eef somebody should pass me near now they would certainly hear my teeth to rattle. I cannot hold them together," she thought.

Soon came the realization that she must find a better place to hide. This was too exposed to discovery and weather. Cautiously she put her head out to peer around and then jerked it back with wide round eyes.

For not two feet from her stood the officer who had spoken to her on the dock below. And his glance had met hers she was sure. She was petrified with horror and unable to move or think.

It was not necessary, for in one long stride the master at arms was beside her and pulling her from her hiding-place.

“I knew it,” he said briefly. “You can’t understand a word I say so I won’t waste my breath. But you know what I mean. Now get!”

It was a rude shove and it sent the weak little girl fairly spinning down the gangway. At the foot she fell in the slippery mud and when she had managed to pull her bruised and aching body upright once again she could not keep the tears back.

Sob after sob came up from the depths of her, tore through her small frame and gulped out into the air. She rammed her dirty hands in her eyes and stumbled blindly to a box a little out of the way and sank down.

Oh dear! what was the use of being brave? She had been brave for so long! And it had done her no good. There was no sense in trying to help herself any longer. A little girl could not do it all alone.

Despair and loneliness were having their way with her when another voice spoke at her side. But this voice was different. It rang with friendliness.

“Hello, kid! Get caught?”

She looked up out of sheer amazement at the

warmth in his tones, and saw a sailor dressed in overalls and middy. His face was ruddy with health and beaming with kindness and good nature. When he saw the white suffering in the strained face turned up to his he stopped grinning and his next question was serious.

“Starved, aren’t you? *Comprenez* English?” he ended abruptly.

“Oh, yes, I speak it!” she replied eagerly.

“My hat!” he ejaculated.

“I am an American,” she went on hurriedly, pouring out her story to the first sympathetic ears she had found since the days of Dr. Jack. “My father was an American—my Mama was French. Both are just killed last fall—and my Grandmère. I am all alone but I have a new Mama in America. She wants me to come. I want to go, but it is the law that no *enfants* shall leave the country until *apres la guerre*—after the war.” In her eagerness to make him understand she clasped and unclasped her hands and her big eyes were wide and bright with wistfulness. Her words tumbled forth—a jumble of English and French—but he managed to understand, to see the

real physical suffering, the brave little spirit almost outworn now in its battle against such odds, the unhappiness and misery if she were left here, the probable joy and comfort for her if she could only reach America.

“Look here, kid,” he seated himself on a plank beside her and began talking in a low rapid voice, “I’ve got a brother just your size. You remind me of him, only he’s well—husky. You’re not. I’ll help you, but you’ve got to keep your nerve and quit crying. Can you?”

His sudden keen glance at her reminded her of Dr. Jack’s steel-blue eyes and she stiffened as though fired by a new hope.

“I can be brave and strong,” she said simply.

“Sure you can. Then listen. The boat sails at eight. It’s five-thirty now. It will be dark in an hour. Go get something to eat between now and then. There’s a shop at the end of that street —”

“But I have no money,” she protested.

He crammed some into her hand for answer and at her start and refusal he waved for silence.

“You can’t do what you’ll have to do unless

you stoke up. Get your mess then slip back here."

He looked around quickly then up at the ship and nodded decisively.

"Yes, right here. Crawl into that empty box behind you. Keep your eyes peeled and your ears empty. About ten minutes before the boat sails I'll whistle like this—and I'll let down a rope. Tie it around your waist, grab it with both hands above and hang on. I'll haul you up. Can you do it?"

Jeanne nodded eagerly.

"Oh, you are so *bon*—good to me. Thank you," she whispered.

"Wait till I've done it," he replied brusquely. "Now beat it and fill up."

Jeanne darted down the dock like a small wraith and disappeared in the deepening gloom of the side street. The sailor watched her with a sober expression in his jolly round face.

"It's part of my bit," he said. "Wish I could do more. Gosh! I'd like to fight the Boches that leave little kids like that alone in the world. Poor kid! Spunky as they make 'em but nearly all in. Well, now I'll hunt up Bert and get his help."

Whistling cheerfully once again he made for the gangway and ran up it.

Jeanne, in the meantime, was certainly filling up. She had not meant to spend all the kind sailor's money but the smell of food had been too much for her.

When she had finished she sighed contentedly and leaned back to look about her. She still had almost an hour before she need go back to the dock, and impatient as she was, she was not eager to huddle in the box in the rain until she had to.

Her gaze wandered about the small room. She saw mostly men. They were a rough, good-natured noisy lot, the majority clad in seamen's clothes. But one man she saw in the crowd attracted her attention by his neatness. He was middle-aged,—his gray beard and hair assured her of that,—and as she looked at him he glanced up and smiled.

Jeanne, heart hungry for friendliness, smiled back and in a moment the well-dressed stranger was leaning over her table.

“ May I join you? ” he asked politely.

“ But surely, ” Jeanne said. “ I stay only a few moments, however.”

“ Ah! You go perhaps on the ship that will sail at eight o’clock?”

His suddenly piercing gaze startled Jeanne. How stupid she had been! What should she do now? He was of course a detective,—or at least somebody important who could keep her off. She caught her breath in dismay. He read her thoughts swiftly.

“ You need not be afraid. We cannot all buy tickets so some must use their cunning. I understand.” He smiled again and Jeanne was a bit reassured. “ I ask because I am so anxious to have an important errand in America attended to. I have watched all evening for someone with intelligence; but these clumsy louts who come here—bah!”

His disgust for them, and appreciation of her, flattered Jeanne.

“ Why surely,” she said, “ if I go to America I shall be glad to do for you what I can.”

He leaned forward suddenly, drawing pencil and note-book from his hand. As he wrote he talked in a low, rapid voice.

“ Go to this place as soon as you can,” he ordered and his guttural voice and imperative manner reminded her of the German officers

she had seen in her home. She drew back slightly and instantly he was suavely polite again.

“It will be a great favor. I am very eager to get these records for my music box. They are for my old mother. She is blind and cannot do anything but sit with folded hands. She loves music. I have tried to get these in this country but one can buy naught but ammunition and food these days. Music is a luxury. It will be her birthday in six weeks and I wanted to give these to her. You have a grandmother?”

Jeanne shook her head.

“Not now. But I understand how it is and I shall make all haste to order them for you.”

“I wrote the numbers of the records below the address. You will not understand, but Mr. Bachrach, the owner of the store, he will know. Thank you. You have taken a load off my mind.”

He left her so suddenly that Jeanne became suspicious again. He might return with policemen or something and arrest her! As soon as he was out of sight she slipped from the

shop and out into the darkness of the night again.

Warmed within if not without, she crept into the big empty box where she was protected from the steady drizzle, and set herself to counting the minutes.

She heard the ship bells twice but she did not know what they meant. The bustle and activity seemed to increase but Jeanne did not dare to peer out. She was so afraid of being left but still more afraid of being discovered at the last minute, so she huddled herself into a small bundle and waited.

Suddenly her strained senses were startled by the whistle. She jumped, and then scrambled out of the box. About her there seemed to be no one, but on shipboard she heard much noise. She peered up—up—up the dark side of the ship and saw two forms leaning over. The whistle was repeated. She tried to answer it but could not. Then something hit her head.

It was the rope. With trembling, fumbling hands she caught the unwieldy thing and tried to knot it about her waist. It was so thick and stiff and her hands were so cold she could not make it stay. She tried and tried and the knot

she at last fastened she knew would not hold if any strain were put on it.

Another whistle came from above. Jeanne made some sort of an answering noise, grasped the rope with both hands tight and felt herself suddenly being lifted.

She twisted and turned and spun as she hung in the air, and when she looked down and saw blackness below her she was so frightened she let out a little gasp.

But that would not do. She must save her breath for holding tight. She looked up. Such a long way to go yet! And her hands, numb with cold, were slipping, slipping. They burned and hurt but still she clung.

Once she banged against the side of the ship and when she swung out again the knot had come unfastened. She was held by nothing now but her two little hands and grit. She closed her eyes and held tight. Faintness came and nausea but she fought them back and suddenly an arm was under her. She was lifted bodily and held. Her hands, clamped like claws about the rope, she could not loosen. Someone pried her fingers open.

She was too dizzy and weak to speak, but

she fluttered her eyes in a signal that she was all right.

“Keep still. You don’t have to do anything more. I’ll do it,” the kind voice she remembered said, and then she was carried—miles.

Down—down—down they went. Jeanne lost track of the number of ladders. At last the endless journey was done and she was laid down.

“Where am I?” she asked, staring about in the gloom.

“In the peak,” he made answer. “That’s way up at the bow of the ship as far below decks as you can get. It’s the best place for stowaways. Now I’ve got to leave you. I’ll bring you some chow later. In the morning you’ll be able to see a little. Don’t try to move, and don’t be scared. I’ll be back soon.”

In a second he was gone and Jeanne’s life as a stowaway began.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE STOWAWAY

AFTER a time Jeanne's eyes became used to the gloom and she saw that she was in a little three-cornered cubbyhole about eight or ten feet across at its widest part. There was nothing in it at all.

She began to feel the reaction from the excitement and strain of the day and for the first time she realized how wet and cold she was. Sitting up she pulled off her soggy shoes and stockings and soaked overalls and sweater. Then from inside her inner blouse where she had kept them folded flat against her, she took out her one extra suit of underwear and stockings. In a few moments she had rubbed herself into a glow with her damp top blouse and had snuggled herself into the warm clothing. Fortunately her inner blouse had remained quite dry except around the neck-band and Jeanne felt that she would not feel the need of more clothing, for the "peak," as the sailor

had called the little room, was quite stuffy. She spread her wet clothes on the floor to dry as best they might, then she crossed her arms under her head and lay down again with her small stockinginged feet stretched before her.

The floor was hard and there was little fresh air but after all she was very well off. She was not hungry nor cold and—oh! joy of joys—she was at last on her way to America and her new mama.

For the ship was moving. She felt a slight movement and drew a long breath. Yes, she was on her way, and now perhaps in ten days, perhaps in two weeks, she would be in New York. What would she do when she got there? She had not thought that out. She tried to, as she lay there, but her body was too tired and her mind refused to work. In a few moments she was fast asleep.

So the big sailor found her when he stole in an hour later. In one hand he held a small flashlight, in the other a plate of food and water. As his glance rested on the neatly spread wet garments on the floor, then on the slim outstretched figure before him, he whistled in astonishment.

"Knows how to make himself at home. Guess he's stowed away before," he murmured. Then his light lit on the tiny slender feet and instantly a look of comprehension swept over his face. From the small feet to the big shoes drying, then back to the face his eyes travelled swiftly. At last he set the plate down and leaned quietly over Jeanne as she lay there, and studied her for a few minutes.

There was no mistaking the delicate pointed chin, despite its resoluteness; there was no mistaking the sweep of dark lashes and curve of cheek despite its grime; there was no mistaking the little hand which rested over her heart, and—he caught up something from the floor, then grinned broadly—there was no possible mistaking the ivory brush and comb and two wee handkerchiefs.

Just at this moment Jeanne's eyes opened slowly.

"Hello!" said the sailor briskly. "I brought some chow for you. Hungry?"

"I guess so," Jeanne answered, as she struggled up to a sitting position. "I am sore," she said, explaining her stiffness. "The wet got into my bones and rusted them, I think."

He watched her as she began nibbling daintily at the food he had brought her. To be sure she was not very hungry; on the other hand a boy, no matter how satisfied he felt, would not manage as skillfully with his fingers as she did.

“Why is it you stare and stare so? Am I then so funny to behold?”

“It’s my bet,” the boy made answer suddenly, “that your name is more Jean than John.”

His direct glance was most disconcerting and before it Jeanne’s eyes dropped and the color mounted.

“It is so,” she said at last. “For that reason no one can dare to punish me too severely.”

The shrewdness of this remark set her companion to laughing. And as suddenly Jeanne pushed the plate from her and leaned back against the bulkhead.

“What’s the trouble?” he asked, instantly sober.

Jeanne shook her head.

“Everything within me seems to be stirring and turning over, and perhaps, coming up. I wish you would go.”

“Seasick,” he muttered. “Poor kid. All right. Bye-bye for now. I’ll be back in the morning. Here, don’t you want this glass of water?”

“Put it there,” Jeanne said feebly and groaned as he went out.

The days that followed were timeless to Jeanne. In her misery she could hardly even thank her friend for all he did for her.

It was little enough of course, but his few attentions did make life more bearable. A wet cloth now and then that she might wash; water to drink; a sweater for warmth if she was cold and for a pillow when she slept. He left his flashlight with her so that the dark might not seem so long and lonely. Food she scarcely touched.

“It is the air that I want,” she said to him the third day. “I feel that I can scarcely breathe. Could I not go with you some night in the dark and breathe real air again? I am so used to sleeping outdoors. All winter I have slept in a tent. And this gives me a bad head and the *mal de mer*.”

He deliberated a moment and at last nodded.

"All right, to-night we'll try it. Can't do a thing but get caught."

"What would they do to me?" Jeanne asked more out of curiosity than fear.

"Can't say," he replied teasingly. "They might set you to keeping the fires going or scrubbing the decks."

"That I could not do," Jeanne answered. "I am not beeg enough, but I could wait on table."

That night when the sailor came for her Jeanne was more than ready. She had even dared to steal a little way to meet him, in her eagerness.

"You must be feeling better," he said in a whisper.

She nodded.

"When I get above I shall be O. K.," she replied. The little American slang came very oddly from her but he did not dare laugh aloud.

"Follow me and hang tight; the old boat is pitching about some."

So Jeanne found it. Desperately she clung to the first ladder as she started crawling up it and when she reached the top, she sank down and called to him.

“Please be so good as to wait. Things are so funny. The boat always goes a different way at a different time and my legs do not know what to expect. I cannot steer myself so well.”

“Better let me carry you,” he offered and before Jeanne could stop him she was caught up like a feather. He made no work at all of the steep ladders and pitching decks and with almost no hold at all he ran up and across, up and across—until at last Jeanne saw above her the blessed heavens.

“Oh, *c'est bon*—it is good,” she sighed drawing a long breath, then of a sudden the sailor halted. It was so sudden that Jeanne knew something was wrong. She lifted her head and—horrors!

Facing them with a stern inquisitory look on his face stood the officer who had sent her off the ship once.

“So you did it after all. Then you must take your punishment. Report to the captain,” he ordered the sailor briefly.

In spite of his burden the lad saluted and still carrying Jeanne made his way to the ship’s captain, who was on the bridge.

"Put me down!" Jeanne said when they stood before him and once on her feet she steadied herself with her left hand and saluted smartly as the sailor did.

"Please, *Monsieur Capitaine*," she began, speaking very fast. "You are not to blame this very good boy at all. He has simply saved my life. That is all. Without him I should have starved and drowned on the dock for I had no money nor clothes nor family and it poured. I desired to cross to America where my new mama will give me all those things. Without him I should have died like a rat in the peak for I had what you call the seasick, oh so bad. I made him bring me to the air to-night. I had to taste it once again. Already I feel better —"

Across the captain's grizzled face had spread first astonishment, then amusement. He gave a curt nod of dismissal to the sailor boy.

"I'll attend to you later."

He saluted and Jeanne was left alone to meet her fate.

"You will not hurt him?" she questioned, following his retreating figure with troubled eyes.

"He will be punished properly for helping a stowaway. It is the rule. Now go on."

Jeanne was quick to see the kindness that lay deep within the gray eyes, the smile lurking behind the bristling mustache and with all the French animation and charm that was inherent in her she told her story.

"Why did you not join the army and fight the Germans?" he asked when she had finished.

"If I could!" she clenched her fists. "But I am not what I seem. It is only the clothes that are boys. The rest of me is not."

"Oh, I see," he chewed his mustache. "Well, that puts a different light on things. If you were a boy now I should make you work your way across. As it is —" he paused. Jeanne had caught the rail with both hands.

"What's the matter?"

"Your ship is so sudden." She looked up flashing a smile at him. "Now it is here—now there. The only way I can stand up is to lie down."

In the end Jeanne was given a bed, a real bed, in a real room where there was a wash-stand and a chair and hooks for clothes and towels. Such luxuries as these she had not

known for months. And she was allowed the freedom of the ship and meals with the officers.

Furthermore a wireless was sent to her new mama telling of her expected arrival and the captain himself undertook to put her safely in Mrs. Stafford's hands.

The only blot on Jeanne's joy was the absence of her friend the sailor boy. She knew he must be doing penance somewhere, but she could not find out how nor where. To all her queries came joking answers, and the trousered little queen, the only lady aboard, was sorely troubled.

## CHAPTER X

### AMERICA AT LAST

BUT she saw him sooner than she had expected. It was on the third night that she had been discovered. On the fifth as she was chatting with her now good friend the captain, they were suddenly startled from their ease by a voice.

“Submarine on the starboard!”

Instantly the captain was on his feet. Instantly alarm bells sounded all over the ship. Instantly the crew began running in orderly haste to “general quarters”—their posts in time of danger.

“Down there”—the captain pointed to the deck below—“by the life-boat. Find your friend. Tell him I say he’s to take care of you.”

“But you?”

“I stay by the ship. Hurry!” he ordered, and Jeanne slid and slipped and ran in all haste to the spot she had been told. Here the famil-

iar face of her friend appeared and suddenly he was towering beside her.

“Don’t be afraid,” he said. “I’ll take care of you.”

“*Monsieur le Capitaine* said so. I am not afraid.”

She stood in silence while he buckled a life-belt about her; and still in silence she watched the purposeful quiet movements of those near her; listened to the few commands coming like cracks through the night air.

She looked up at the heavens so vast and black and pricked through all over by millions and millions of tiny stars. Then she glanced down at the heaving black ocean.

“It is so big and beautiful,” she thought.

It had been scarcely two minutes from the time the alarm had sounded to the time when “she’s missed” was sung out. During it Jeanne had not had one twinge of fear, only a reluctant thought of the possibility of her not reaching America and her new mama after all.

Although they were safe — miraculously saved by scarcely more than a hair’s breadth — extra precautions were taken during the rest of the night. The watch was doubled; lights were

extinguished; absolute silence reigned and the course was zigzagged until they were well past the danger zone.

“But why should they fire on us?” Jeanne asked the captain the next day. “This is an American merchant ship, a peaceful business. Is it not so? It is not French or English.”

“That doesn’t seem to matter,” the captain replied dryly. “If they are trying to stir America up they’ll be sorry too late. We’re a fast country when we get started. This makes me wish we’d start.”

“I wish so too.” Jeanne made thoughtful answer. “Those wicked Boches must be stopped. It may be our French and English cannot do it alone. I have fear.”

The remainder of the voyage was made in quiet. Jeanne’s seasickness disappeared as she became used to the rolling motion, and with fresh air, good food and care she soon began to get back some color and sparkle. She was a ready favorite with everyone, for all by now knew the story of her pluck. Hour after hour she would talk with the captain or the seamen.

“Why is it they must always scrub when things are always clean?” she asked the captain

one day, her eyes on some sailors swabbing the deck.

“We’re trying to make good wives out of them,” he replied with a twinkle. “In the meantime it keeps them out of mischief.”

“They are tired sometimes—and there’s not one single chair for them to rest in.”

“They rest at night,” he made short answer.

“Is Monsieur Kelly all through being punished?” she asked. Tom Kelly was the name of her good Samaritan she had at last discovered.

“Monsieur Kelly is good,” he murmured. “Yes, he’s had all his spankings now and if he behaves himself from now on he can have dessert once in a while. Aren’t you a little ashamed to have gotten him into trouble?”

She looked up soberly into his grim kind face.

“Ashamed—no. Sorry—yes. But it is the fault of your so stupid rules. What harm can a little thing like myself do?”

“But if it weren’t for the rules there would be many little things like yourself swarming over the ship. And many would do great harm.”

Across Jeanne's wise-old little face flashed the smile so like sunshine and shadowed mountain tops, and the captain cried:

"Good. You must smile always, Jeanne. Always. You are beautiful when you do."

"I—I—hoped I was beautiful always," she murmured demurely, with downcast eyes. "*Certainement, my clothes are!*" she ended. "Ah! How glad I shall be to get from these!" She brushed her overalls impatiently. "Do you think Mama will be there to meet me? Will you take care of me till I find her? I do not wish to trouble, but do you know? I am vairy, vairy tired of bossing myself."

"I am very sure she will be there to meet you and if she is not either I or Monsieur Kelly will put you safely in her hands."

Sunny days—blue ocean—white clouds—this was the sum total of Jeanne's existence that week. A little purring happiness was in her heart and she assured the captain that spring was here. She could smell things growing even that far from land.

"That's a wonderful nose you have there," he replied.

She squinted down it.

“Wonderful with freckles—yes. They are so big and brown. Might I have some pieces of the lemon, *Monsieur le Capitaine*? One says it may help.”

He searched through his pockets soberly and diligently.

“I can’t seem to find any just now,” he sighed. “I was sure I had some. But I tell you what, *monsieur le cook* will very likely have some. If you care to beg some of him —”

This brought the sunny smile and as Jeanne ran away the captain was satisfied. It was queer how hard everyone tried to bring that smile to Jeanne’s face. It was the only thing that made it look young. Her eyes were brooding with memories, her mouth was wistful with sadness and her face in repose told of suffering and wisdom beyond her years. But the dimpling smile and the spilling laugh brought youth back, and all those who had once seen the transfiguration worked hard to see it again.

“For if she can smile enough maybe some of the sadness will go,” they all thought.

At last came the breathless day when land

was first seen. Jeanne stared through the glasses.

"*Oui*—it is *Amerique* at last, beautiful America. I am a vairy lucky girl."

And the captain, watching her, was as amazed as Dr. Jack at her persistent faith in her good fortune.

"You are a diligent believer in the eternal all-rightness of things, aren't you?" he asked.

"As soon as the Boches are licked, I will be," she made answer.

The hours seemed to crawl. Jeanne wanted to push the boat with her hands but her impatience did no good. It was night when they finally entered the harbor and saw the beautiful Statue of Liberty welcoming them with its blaze of light.

Jeanne looked at it with tears in her eyes. She could not say why. Something too big for expression had risen in her and nearly overwhelmed her. The captain stood beside her bareheaded, sharing her mood.

"'The land of the free and the home of the brave,'" he said at last softly. "Say it, Jeanne, for this country is yours now."

"'The land of the free and the home of the

brave," she repeated, "and the home for lost children too," she added. "Think of it, *Monsieur le Capitaine*. Is it not wonderful that American mothers are adopting us—ragged and dirty and bad and good and learned and unlearned? They take us all—without so much as a picture, into their hearts and homes."

"It is very wonderful," he replied soberly. "But it is, after all, very little; we should do more. We will do more."

"And is that New York?" Jeanne asked, for at last the city brilliant and magnificent in all its lights lay before her. "All that grand big stretch of brightness? Oh! It is marvellous. I cannot say how it is."

"Don't try," he replied. "Others have failed before you."

So in silence they rode majestically into the harbor and facing the shining city of warmth and light and plenty, they dropped anchor until morning.

## CHAPTER XI

### A NEW PREDICAMENT

DESPITE their preoccupation and business almost everyone stopped to look and look again at the queer little figure perched on a huge box. For the contradictory appearance of the youngster was bewildering.

There was first of all a shining head of beautiful pale gold curls that clustered about an alert delicately pink young old face in which big brown eyes stared and wondered and laughed. One could almost see the thoughts chasing behind their brown depths.

Below the beautiful head and face was a slim body almost lost in a rough white middy of Monsieur Kelly's. The sleeves had to be rolled up and up until they formed huge bulks above her elbow and the V neck had to be pinned together or Jeanne would have slipped through. The blouse and herself were snugly tucked inside a pair of worn, faded blue overalls nearly the right size; but it was the feet that brought the smiles to the passer-by, for

Jeanne's tiny ankles rose from a pair of man's size white sneakers. Her own shoes had never been recovered.

At the downward glance and the smile, Jeanne sometimes smiled back for, to her, her feet were funny too, and then strangers would look again, for with the smile had gone the sad, wise expression and pure bubbling merriment had appeared instead. But Jeanne for the most part was too absorbed hunting through the crowd to pay any attention to the many stares that came her way.

At last the captain came back and Jeanne divined at once by the scowl on his face that something was wrong.

"You cannot find my new Mama," she announced quietly.

"You're a fox, to guess so soon," he replied, a smile struggling through his concern. "But don't let it worry you. I'll telephone. Wait right here."

He was gone again and again Jeanne swung her funny feet and stared at the throng about her. Tom Kelly joined her for a few moments and expressed amazement and anger when she told him her newest trouble.

"What to do next, I know not," she ended, feeling suddenly helpless.

"Now, Miss Jeanne, chase that look off your face. Why should you be troubling yourself with two big men like the captain and myself, ready to move heaven and earth for you? Say ——"

He darted suddenly back to his duties as he saw the captain approach.

"I can't get their house," he explained. "Central says they don't answer. I'll try again later. In the meantime I've sent a telegram. And now, my dear ——"

The good man regarded her quizzically.

"What is it?" she asked.

"I shall take you home to my mother tonight, but she wouldn't let you in if you looked like that. We must go shopping."

Jeanne clapped her hands.

"Lovely! And please keep very careful account of all you spend for me, because I am so sure Mama will pay you back."

Of the cross-examinations the captain had been submitted to; the papers he had shown and others he had signed; the money he had paid; and of multitudinous other details con-

nected with the red tape of admitting a French refugee and stowaway into the country,— Jeanne was serenely unaware. As a matter of course she accepted his plans and when he appeared for the last time, with a big sigh of satisfaction and announced himself ready to buy out New York, she sprang down and trotted off obediently beside him. Passers-by regarded the strange pair curiously.

He was aware of the attention Jeanne's appearance was attracting and as they reached the street his look of embarrassment changed to one of sudden decision. He snapped his fingers at a passing taxicab and in a second he and his queer little comrade were safely hidden in its depths.

“Now,” breathed the captain, pushing back his cap and mopping his forehead, “let's see. You need —”

He glanced down at her comically.

“Everything,” Jeanne said quickly, “from my feet up and my skin out.”

“Well—ah,” the captain coughed a bit nervously. Shopping expeditions with small, young ladies were not his specialty. “Suppose we begin at the feet,” he ended hastily.

“Stop at a shoe store,” he ordered the driver.

“Yes, sir. Which one?”

“The first one in Brooklyn,” the captain answered hastily in his snappiest voice. He sensed a laugh behind the polite tones of the driver.

They stopped before a shoe store and the captain descended, presenting his hand to Jeanne in his courtliest manner. He was determined none should laugh at the spectacle they presented, and so immense was his dignity that no one did—to his face. No one, that is, except Jeanne. She giggled frankly and glancing up while they were waiting for the clerk to bring some shoes, she said:

“*Monsieur le Capitaine* on land is a very different *Monsieur le Capitaine* than on sea.”

“I am my mother’s son,” he replied. “I’m always reminded of it when I set foot on soil.”

“What can that mean?” Jeanne asked, puzzled. “Of course you are your mother’s son.”

“You’ll see what I mean when you meet her,” he replied. “She is a great lady. That is why I want you to look your best. How do those shoes feel? Comfortable?”

Jeanne regarded the square-toed, low-heeled black ties that were on her feet. Then she stood up.

"But yes. They are the most comfortable I have yet had for months. But so different from the French shoes. You do not have higher heels?"

"Oh, no," the clerk replied, "this is the only model."

"They look very nice, I think," the captain offered. "But don't get them unless you want them."

Jeanne was fearful lest she had seemed ungrateful, so in a rush of words she accepted them and thanked him. As they left the store it came across her in a flash that she had been in a men's shop and of course there would be no high heels there. She checked her gasp of dismay. It was too late to change and she would not hurt the dear captain's feelings for anything. Besides what did it matter?

"Jove!" the captain paused with his hand on the door. "We could get socks there, too. I see them in the window. Wait here, and I'll go back and get them. He'll know your size."

"Some blue ones and some pink ones!"

Jeanne cried after him, and then settled back in the seat of the car. Socks would feel good again. This would probably be the last year she could wear them. Mama had said so, but she was still small, and they were so cool in summer.

“Here!” the captain thrust a packet in her lap and climbed in. “Open ‘em up and put on a pair.”

Jeanne chose the green and white ones that met her eye. They were very different, too, from the French ones she had worn as a girl, but still they fitted and they were clean and whole.

“Suits!” the captain thundered to the driver who was still waiting his next order.

“Oh, tell him a ladies’ store,” Jeanne cried quickly, as she pulled her ties on again and rolled up her trousers to get the desired effect.

“Ladies’ suits!” the captain corrected and off they went, in and out of small, narrow streets until they reached a store where suits, unmistakably ladies, were displayed in the window.

Jeanne, in the meantime, had been doing

some thinking and determined to take the lead of the expedition in her hands. The captain was very good and very kind but he didn't know all he should about girls' clothes. It was in genuine relief that the captain saw Jeanne march straight up to the beaming, suave man who came forward to meet them.

"I'm not a boy," Jeanne said. "I'm a girl, and I want a girl's suit—a blue one with blue buttons and pockets."

"Certainly. Come right this way. You are quite small but we will do the best we can for you."

He turned her over to a woman who took a voluble and motherly interest in the little refugee and who honestly did her best to fit Jeanne. But in the end the smallest suit they had was a big black and white checked affair that Jeanne detested. She felt more conspicuous than in her overalls, but she knew they could do no better here and the captain's patience was evidently exhausted. Biting back her tears, Jeanne left the store, clad now in a long, loud-checked suit below which her boyish ties and green and white socks appeared ridiculously. Jeanne knew now she should have



Isabel W. Catey

“ You May Stay Here,” She Said



stockings—and black ones—but she would not let herself care.

“If I don’t bend over, no one will know they are socks,” she reasoned, “because my skirt is long. Oh, *Capitaine*,” she called, “see! Next to this store is a place of hats. Could we not get one?”

The captain, who was immensely pleased with the improved appearance of his protégée, led the way into the store with a pride and dignity that was this time very real. He was totally unconscious of the glances that cut Jeanne to the quick, and was greatly surprised to see her decide upon the first hat that was put on her head. Jeanne, however, was mortified beyond words, for her quick eyes kept making comparisons and she longed to hide herself in the taxicab again.

“This will do,” she said, scarcely glancing at herself. Fortunately it really did do very well. It was a plain black sailor hat that set off her pale gold curls and toned down her suit. She wore it out of the store and hastily climbed into the waiting taxi, leaving the astonished captain to pay for the most expensive hat in the store.

"Fifteen dollars!" he ejaculated, "and nothing on it but ribbon! That's what her suit cost!"

"I guessed so," the woman replied with biting sarcasm. "Her hat is real Panama straw. Very hard to get. Thank you."

In the taxi the two warm shoppers mutually agreed to put off buying the vague "other things,"—the captain because the hat had nearly emptied his pocketbook, the girl because she wanted to face no more covertly smiling women.

"I don't need them, anyway. That is, if I am permit to wash these that I wear?"

There was a nod from the captain and then a long silence during which Jeanne recovered her equanimity.

"What does it matter about clothes, after all?" she reasoned, "except to have them cover you and be clean. But I am glad, for all that, that I kept my old blouse and overalls —" she patted a bundle in her lap lovingly. "I feel better in them and if people keep staring I shall climb into them again. They stare at me in those, too, but it is a different stare."

“ My mother is an aristocratic autocrat,” the captain said, suddenly.

“ An —— ? ” Jeanne could not pronounce it. “ What is that ? ”

“ A lady whose habits are as fixed as the course of the sun, moon and stars; a lady whose wish is a command; a lady who cannot understand poverty, laws or contradiction.”

Jeanne waited for more. It came, after a big sigh.

“ My mother never forgave me for joining the Navy. She never remembers I am grown up. I am terribly polite always. You must not laugh as you did this afternoon.”

Jeanne was somewhat impressed, a little fearful and altogether curious, but a new thought suddenly prevented further questioning.

“ Oh ! Wait ! ” she cried. “ I have another errand. A most important one. Can we not go to here ? ”

She fumbled about for the address given her by the gray-haired stranger in the delicatessen shop and at last found it in the pocket of her blouse.

“ I so nearly forgot. And I promised to do

it. "It's for his old mother." Jeanne told the little episode in all the full details and instantly the captain was the captain she knew at sea—alert, commanding, suspicious, gruff. He listened in silence, but gave an order to the driver and after a few moments they drew up before a small music store.

Jeanne gave her order while the captain stood idly by the door apparently intent on the people passing in the street. He was, however, keenly conscious of the sudden look that was darted at his broad back and of the swift interrogative gaze that swept Jeanne.

"Thank you so much," the storekeeper was more than polite. "Herr—Mr. Smith is my particular friend. I will attend to the order at once so the poor mother may have her birthday present."

Jeanne, not in the least understanding his sly wink, smiled brightly at him; thanked him and followed the captain from the store.

Into the good man's mind had come a perturbing thought. Jeanne—doing business with unmistakable Germans. Could he possibly have been fooled by an ingenuous little girl

and have admitted a German spy into the country? Into his home? Into his heart?

He brushed the thought from him. Surely it was the other way. Jeanne was the unconscious tool of these scheming men. But in his doubt and perplexity the captain decided to say nothing for the present and they proceeded in silence to the home of the "aristocratic autocrat."

## CHAPTER XII

### “THE ARISTOCRATIC AUTOCRAT”

JEANNE followed the captain up a flight of stone steps, through a hall door opened by a bowing, grinning, fat negress, up a dark stairway to a door on the floor above.

The captain knocked. He was breathing hard and Jeanne's heart began hammering in sympathy.

“Come!” called an imperious voice, and Jeanne, following the captain, stood just inside the door.

She saw a beautiful room, furnished in exquisite old-fashioned mahogany that was polished to a wonderful lustre. By a window sat the captain's mother, half turned from Jeanne's wide stare. She was erect in a straight back chair and Jeanne instantly gave homage to the beauty that still shone in that sedate old figure.

Her hair, snow-white under a dainty lavender ribboned lace cap, was fluffed prettily over her ears. Her eyes still sparkled with bright-

ness; her cheeks still held a faint tint of rose. Her gown was of lavender silk with a quaint white kerchief high about her neck that was half concealed by a wide lace shawl. One little foot rested on an ottoman, one small wrinkled hand tapped impatiently at the arm of her chair. Beside her stood a table covered with flowers, glasses of medicine and water, a newspaper and a Bible.

Jeanne saw all this before the captain could reach the proud old lady who lifted a cool cheek in an aloof disdain for his kiss.

“Well, Mother. How are you?”

“As well as can be expected. Are you not late in appearing here? I saw by the paper that your ship came in this morning. What has detained you?”

Her question was a demand for an explanation and Jeanne understood why the captain had said,—“She never remembers I am grown up.” He started to make a blundering reply, including an introduction of Jeanne when her glance suddenly fell on the startling little figure in the doorway.

Up and down travelled the gaze of the haughty lady missing not a detail of the girl’s

appearance. Jeanne felt holes bored through her long skirt where her socks ended and she shrivelled and grew cold. But as Mrs. Wentworth spoke to her son in a cool contemptuous tone, Jeanne suddenly flared into hot anger and instantly she and the old lady were sworn enemies.

“What is this that you have brought into my house, sir?”

“Now, Mother dear —” he began but she interrupted.

“Take her away. She hurts my eyes.”

With tears scalding her cheeks Jeanne was led out by the angered and helpless captain. He left her in a wee room at the end of the hall, evidently a sewing-room, for the machine was open and the small bed was cluttered with scraps and clippings.

Jeanne threw herself down and buried her face. Tears came,—of anger, hate, homesickness, loneliness and despair. She was alone for over an hour and when at last the captain came back he found Jeanne white but calm. He himself was also white and calm but there was an air of victory about him that reassured the little girl.

“Come with me.”

He led her back to Mrs. Wentworth’s room and up to the regal lady. Jeanne regarded her, trying to hide all expression of her feelings, but her face was too mobile and the wide eyes betrayed the hurt that had gone deep while her trembling lips could not hide her pride and sensitiveness.

“You may stay here,” the captain’s mother said graciously, in tones that were not unkind, “until Mrs. Stafford can be found. Make yourself useful and don’t ever come in here unless I call you.”

So Jeanne came to her first home in America and settled down in the wee sewing-room for an indefinite period. For it had been ascertained that Mrs. Stafford had left her home for an extended stay of several weeks. She had left no forwarding address and the cable from mid-ocean announcing her new daughter’s arrival, as well as the telegram sent from the dock, were held awaiting her return. It was useless to telephone or write, after having once given her Jeanne’s address in Brooklyn; so Jeanne with the old philosophy that her experience had given her took her life day by

day as it came and did her best to make herself happy in a place she disliked with a woman she hated.

For the hate born at the moment of meeting had increased rather than decreased. She despised the way the old lady treated the good captain,—“like an old shoe,” she used to say fiercely. “He is comfortable and won’t pinch so she wears him.”

If she had not been so angered she would have laughed at the poor captain’s misery in his home. His commanding air had crumpled. He tiptoed and whispered at Mrs. Wentworth’s nap time.

He was punctiliously polite almost to servility. Jeanne hated the formality of the “good-morning” and “good-night” ceremony when “son” must kiss “mother” and report his day’s doings and Jeanne must likewise report though she was spared the kiss.

The captain’s leave of absence lasted only a few days. In that time Jeanne had gone out with him daily until she had learned her way about a bit. She now knew how to get to the grocery store for Mrs. Wentworth’s oranges; the drug store for her medicines; the

newspaper stand for her newspaper. On one of these errands she stumbled across the little music shop where she had ordered the records.

The German stood at the window and recognized her. He smiled and beckoned to her to come in.

Jeanne was lonely and responded with alacrity. The captain had said he would not be back until late so she entered the little shop and talked with the man for quite a while. He asked her many questions,—her name, the boat she had come on, the captain's name, where she lived now,—and countless others. Incidentally he learned that she was not in sympathy with the Germans as he had at first believed. But strangely enough he did not learn that she was a French refugee. Jeanne refrained from telling of her life before meeting the gray-haired stranger in the meat-shop, partly because the recalling of these memories upset her physically and partly because of her natural reticence before this man who was of German blood.

“ Still he is an American now,” Jeanne reasoned when she was on the street again. “ I

should not dislike him now. He has left wicked Germany. He must love America as I do because he lives here. Oh, hello!"

She ran to catch up with the captain whom she spied just ahead of her and chattered gaily of her visit with Mr. Bachrach. The captain's brows knit as he listened, for the new doubt of Jeanne pricked through him, but again he said nothing.

"I leave to-morrow," he announced suddenly.

Such dismay flamed on the face of the little girl beside him that the captain was stirred to contrition. She was such a mite—and so terribly alone. He patted her hand, speaking cheerfully.

"Come now! That's no sort of face to send me off with! After all, you are safe here, and Mrs. Stafford will surely look you up the moment she returns!"

Jeanne made a brave effort but the tears would fill her eyes. She stared straight ahead of her, teeth set and head erect. Safe—yes. But she was not going to be happy. How she could endure living with this aristocratic old mother of the captain's—so different a grand-

mother from the one she remembered—she did not know. Oh, well! It would not be for long. Surely the new Mama would return—why, perhaps in a week! She flung her head still higher and the glittering drops were shaken down her cheeks. The captain saw them and was seized with a sudden brilliant idea.

“I have it! The very thing! We will go on a party—you and I. We will do the town! Paint it red! Think of it! You have never seen New York in its gay evening dress. How stupid I have been! Come, Jeanne, how about it?”

Jeanne flashed a grateful smile at the burly man beside her with his tender woman-heart. How good he was! And how understanding. It would take bravery to refuse old Madame her last evening with her son but he would face the music all for her. The least she could do in return was not to let him guess her real anxiety concerning her future; her first terrible doubts of the good fortune that seemed so assured; her dread of the close companionship of his mother. No, at least she could smile and pretend a courage of sorts.

So she became very gay and many projects

were examined, discussed and discarded. New York was so big and wonderful, and offered so much to be seen! But at last Jeanne decided on a hotel for dinner where she could hear music and watch people dance, after that—the theatre.

While the captain was making his explanation and apology to Mrs. Wentworth, Jeanne was busy in her wee room. She must somehow improve her odd appearance. She could not embarrass and disgrace the captain as she had that first day in America—the day of their shopping expedition.

Frowning, she surveyed herself in the glass. Her head was all right. Bobbed hair and a neat sailor hat. Her suit wouldn't be bad if—she twitched at it, twisting and turning before the mirror, and finally, by shortening her skirt she decided she would look better. Of course that showed her bare legs but one pair of socks, fortunately, was long. By dint of stretching she could make them reach almost to her knees, though they would only roll over once. Never mind. It was better. She would hurry and hem up the skirt —

“Yes, I am ready!”

Scarlet-cheeked, and happy-eyed she stood at last before the captain. He stared at her, puzzled.

“What have you been doing to yourself?” he asked.

“Do you like it?”

“Yes, but what —?”

“Magic!” she cried. “If you like it better never mind what or how. Oh, I can go now with a feather-heart.”

So these two adventurers went gaily forth into the bewildering night of New York, the night that was not night because of its dazzling lights. And Jeanne was entranced. It was wonderful to her, a land of brightness and beauty; of wealth and happiness. The glitter and glamor of it caught her and held her almost dumb. It had been so long, oh so frightfully long, since she had seen people playing like this. Was there a war after all? It was hard to remember. And for this one night Jeanne did not want to remember.

She followed the captain into the great hotel and up the steps to the big entrance hall like one in a dream. For a long time they sat in the wicker chairs, close by the palms and the

canaries and the Hawaiian orchestra, watching the people come and go. It was fascinating to Jeanne, but at last she turned to her companion.

“Now we will go eat. I have watched for so long that I begin to see ugliness under the beauty in faces. They are not all happy, for all their lovely looks.”

So they passed into the huge gold and white dining-room, where soft music, out of sight somewhere, stirred Jeanne’s pulses. When the captain handed her the menu she gave it back to him quickly.

“It doesn’t matter,” she said with a smile. “Anything.” And while he ordered the dinner she turned her eyes on the dancers again.

“I could do that,” she murmured half to herself.

“Would you like to try it?” The captain was half serious, half earnest, his gray eyes under his bushy brows twinkling while his face was sober.

“You?—oh! do you—can you ——?”

Jeanne was in confusion. She had not known he danced. But still, why not? There

were others, fatter and much older, out there doing it. While she hesitated, he leaned forward.

“I dare you!”

In an instant Jeanne was on her feet, threading her way among the tables to the bare space in the centre where she and the captain—a strange-looking couple—took their place in the circling crowd.

Jeanne was as light as air and adapted herself instantly to the captain’s measure and to her astonishment she found him gliding smoothly, in perfect time, and apparently very much at home in the new steps that had looked so intricate at first.

It was amazing! But Jeanne, loving the dance as a poet loves words, wasted no time wondering. Whenever the music struck a particularly captivating tune and the captain’s grizzled eyebrows went up, she dropped her knife and fork and rose like a flash.

They were always watched by puzzling strangers who must have finally decided they were grandfather and granddaughter. But this time Jeanne, serene in the consciousness of her more conventional appearance, forgot all

about onlookers, and was beautifully unaware of the glances that fell on her.

“Oh! It has all been beautiful, Captain!” she cried when at last the dinner was over. “And you—you dance like a duck!”

“Like a duck! Well, I must say that’s rather a doubtful compliment!”

“It was not meant so!” Jeanne cried quickly. “It was meant to be most utterly the best!”

“There, now, that’s better. Now you’re talking.” The captain, mollified, pulled out his watch. “Mercy, little lady! We’ll be late to the theatre if we don’t hurry.”

The bill was paid at last and they were out in the street again, Jeanne, clinging to the captain’s arm, and with the music still ringing in her ears, dancing along by his side.

To-night she was happy! To-morrow she might die of lonesomeness, but she wouldn’t, for she would always have the memory of to-night and—she glanced up suddenly at the captain’s face.

“You are glad to be here—with me? Not—at home?” she asked.

“You bet I am,” he replied so heartily that

Jeanne's last compunction for the aristocratic autocrat vanished.

The captain had, of course, chosen a musical comedy for the treat. One of those light-hearted rollicking frolics which brings laughter from a delighted audience almost every moment. Jeanne's high sweet laughter made many a head turn in her direction.

“It's just a giggling thing,” she said after the first act. “But it does make you feel rested in your heart. Americans do know how to laugh, I think, and have the good time. Oh, may we not go out and walk up and down behind us as others are doing? I can then see the people better.”

So they joined the crowd of strollers for the fifteen minutes before the curtain went up again. Then back to their seats and the darkness. At the end of the second act they went out again. The captain excused himself to go buy Jeanne a box of candy and when he returned he could not find her. She had promised to stand by the post near the aisle and in some concern he stood waiting for a few moments, his kind eyes suddenly keen and searching the moving throng.

Ah! There she was! coming toward him now. And with her—who should it be but the Kelly boy?

“Isn’t it the luck?” Jeanne cried gaily. “Here I was all alone and thinking you had gone off to eat of the candy yourself! When I heard Monsieur Kelly’s voice. Never have I been so glad. Oh, Captain dear, might we not somehow all be together?”

Somehow they might. The good captain with a little manœuvering managed to persuade one of the ushers that three empty seats nearer the front than their own were meant for them, and Jeanne’s happiness was complete.

As they stood saying good-night to Tom Kelly in the lobby someone seized the captain’s arm. Kelly vanished, after a last hand-shake with Jeanne, and she turned to meet an antiquated couple, friends of the captain. Jeanne acknowledged the introductions in her charming way and then turned to watch the people streaming by her. The other three were talking eagerly, with a rush of questions as long-parted friends do, and Jeanne, listening intermittently, with a mind confused from the

hurry and bewilderment of the evening, thought what a breathy voice the woman had. Her words seemed to come in chunks as though blown up from some deep region within her tremendous body. The voice and the enormous bulk of the woman beside her rather shrinking husband were the only distinct impressions Jeanne carried away with her. She wouldn't know them again, either of them, she thought with a little stab of compunction, if she should meet them in the street at a later date. But it couldn't be helped. Her mind had registered so much that wonderful evening and what did it matter, anyway? She would probably never see them again. But Jeanne could not guess what life had in store for her, and what terror that breathy voice would strike to her heart a little later.

## CHAPTER XIII

### JEANNE GOES TO WORK

JEANNE strove to be patient but she found her life with the imperious old lady more difficult than her life in the rest camp or on ship-board.

That Mrs. Wentworth merely endured her presence was evident. And that she considered her low-born and uneducated was also evident, for Jeanne was ordered about very much as was the fat old negress. The little girl resented the sharp commands and quick complaints but she had by this time learned to control her tongue and conscious that she was indebted for a home and food, tried the harder to please the thoroughly spoiled and pampered old lady.

The inevitable result was that Jeanne, deft and polite, clean and quick, soon suited Mrs. Wentworth better than her heavy-footed colored servant, and Jeanne, too late, saw her mistake. It was now she who must prepare

dainty trays for the fickle appetite of the autocrat; she who could best make cocoa and comb hair, and she found herself nothing more nor less than a handmaiden.

She had little freedom, only the two hours when Mrs. Wentworth took her daily nap; but these Jeanne made the most of. She always went out, and almost always to the music shop where Mr. Bachrach was invariably friendly and pleased to see her. He often let her wait on the people who came to the store, and as they were all friendly and interested in her, she quite enjoyed it. Sometimes she was given letters to mail as she left, and the importance of this mission was usually greatly stressed.

So the days went by, days of monotony and little interest for Jeanne; of nagging criticism and patronage unbearable to the well-bred, high-strung little girl. This constant strain on her control and her temper told on her and there came at last, out of a clear sky, the inevitable flash and crash of the storm that sent her flying from the only home she knew in America.

She was writing a letter to Dr. Jack in her wee bedroom when she heard the tinkle of a

bell. With a sigh she rose and went swiftly down the hall to Mrs. Wentworth's room.

"Come in," the old lady called in answer to Jeanne's knock.

She was sitting as usual in her chair by the window. As usual she was daintiness itself in lavender and lace, her fine old face mellowed in the warm morning sunlight.

"Good-morning, my dear," she said graciously. "You slept well, I trust?"

"Yes, thank you." Jeanne privately thought this daily ceremony a ridiculous nuisance. But it was part of the gentlewoman's breeding and a still greater part of her habit.

"And what time did you retire last evening?"

"About ten," Jeanne replied. "I was reading a wonderful book."

"Oh, my dear, that is too late for a little girl of your years. It is not a good thing to get into the habit of such late hours. And habits, my dear, rule our lives. If you make good ones you will have a long useful life. I am firmly convinced it is my habit of minute daily caring for my health that keeps me as I am to-day. And you must admit," she ended with

pardonable pride, "that I do not look or act eighty-nine."

"Oh, no indeed," Jeanne cried. "Not a bit."

In one way or another this daily compliment was pulled forth.

"Now I am ready for my breakfast," Mrs. Wentworth dismissed Jeanne gracefully. "An orange; a little oatmeal and cream; my coffee—and not so strong as it was yesterday. It was positively bitter; my coddled egg, fried potatoes and toast. That will be all this morning."

"All!" Jeanne thought as she busied herself down-stairs attending to the perfection of daintiness that was required. "All! I should hope so! She eats so much as a man! And every day and every meal."

She cut the orange in half, loosened it from its skin and sprinkled a little sugar on it.

"The sugar on this! The sugar on oatmeal! The sugar in her coffee! And the whole country trying to save. It makes me to bubble!"

At last the meal was ready and with great care lest she spill a bit of cream or coffee over, Jeanne ascended the stairs again. This was a

daily ordeal, but all went well until she reached Mrs. Wentworth's side when she suddenly tripped on her shoe-lace. The next instant poor Jeanne fell flat, the tray crashing down before her and the breakfast splashing plentifully over Mrs. Wentworth's lavender dress and the floor.

Jeanne sprang to her feet, her face fiery with mortification.

"Oh! I am so sorry!" she began when suddenly —

Splash!

Mrs. Wentworth had picked up her glass of water from the stand by her side and had dashed it into Jeanne's astonished face. She was dumb with surprise for a moment but the next words lashed her to a cold fury.

"You clumsy girl!" Mrs. Wentworth cried. "It's the shoes, of course. Dreadful ones as I said. But in keeping with your dreadful suit. I suspected that your lack of taste indicated a lack of refinement but this proves you to be one of the bourgeois of France beyond a doubt. Leave the room! Don't come into my sight again to-day! Send Peace to me at once!"

Jeanne dared not trust herself to speak. Never could she remember being so angry. And at an old lady, too! It was terrible. It was wicked to hate so. But she could not help it.

In a choking voice she called Peace, the old colored mammy, and then she dashed into her room, seized her despised checked coat and hat and ran down the stairs to the street.

"I'll never go back," she breathed. "I'll never go back. I'll die first!"

Over and over she said it, walking swiftly all the time. Gradually her anger died and common sense returned.

"I'll have to go back," she concluded finally. "But I won't go near her. Nevaire will I wait on her again. She can't put me out. She promised the captain she wouldn't. And I don't have to wait on her. I wouldn't if she paid me!"

Into her great flashing eyes came suddenly the dart of a new idea.

"If I could work! And get paid! I'd save all the moneys until I had enough to get to my new Mama. In that city I would tell my story and people would keep me until Mama

returns. I will work!" she decided suddenly. "I cannot fill my days with nothingness now that I am no longer to wait upon Madame."

It was characteristic of Jeanne that she went from thought to deed. In a few moments she was at the door of the little music shop, her face so afire with emotion that it was not necessary for Mr. Bachrach to inquire if anything was the matter.

Jeanne plunged into speech.

"Monsieur Bachrach. You know me for an honest girl. I desire employment. I will do anything. I will dust, sweep, wait on the so many peoples, write letters—anything. But work I must."

"Vell, vell," the German was all friendly concern. Bit by bit he drew out the story from the excited little girl, learning at last all about her orphanage and nodding his head in solemn sympathy as she talked.

"So," he cried when she had done, "you vish to vork in mine shop. Gute. There is nuddings much you can do. But vat there is you shall do."

"And you will pay me?" Jeanne cried.

"A leetle," he replied. "A leetle money for a leetle vork for a leetle girl. And ven you are wort' more you get more. You see?"

He was greatly pleased at this sudden development. With Jeanne, unmistakably French, much in evidence in his store, she would help allay the suspicion that he knew as a German he was arousing. Moreover, she was an innocent, trusting little piece of humanity and could be made a tool for many nefarious schemes, the import of which she would never grasp.

In fact, as he set Jeanne to work rearranging records, and indexing them in his books, his crafty brain was evolving a splendid idea. He would give it out casually that he had adopted Jeanne himself as his "bit" in the great world war. He chuckled to himself but Jeanne was too absorbed to notice, and when a stranger entered a few moments later and the heads of the two men were close together, Jeanne remained still unconscious of their nods and glances and grins.

She stayed until noon, dashed home for lunch, and reappeared in less than the hour that was given her. She was tremendously excited and pleased over this scheme of hers

and began to do some careful figuring to see how long it would take her to earn five dollars if she was getting seventy-five cents a week.

“I now go out,” Mr. Bachrach said. “It is a great trust to leave you here alone in charge. Remember, no one gets the records that are numbered unless they show you a little slip like this.” He pulled one from his pocket and explained to Jeanne’s questioning eyes. “It is because these numbered records are rare. They are made in *Deutschland* and are made no more now. I keep my few for some particular friends—real music lovers. You see?”

Jeanne nodded solemnly, and, left alone, returned to her figuring. She never knew that Mr. Bachrach reached the rear door of his shop by a circuitous route and stood behind a curtain watching her all the afternoon as she dealt with unusual ability with the shoppers.

If she could have seen the smile of satisfaction that slipped over his face when a plain clothes man vainly questioned her, she would have suspected something was wrong. Mr. Bachrach knew the detective and shook in silent glee behind the curtain as a look of puzzlement spread over the features of the secret

service agent, for Jeanne was freely answering all his questions about herself, her family and her experiences, with such swift sincerity and apparent hatred of things German that it was impossible to suspect her of treachery.

"But you are working for a German now," the man said at last. "How can you, after all you have suffered, bear to be here?"

"He is not a German—only his name," Jeanne said. "He has an American heart, and soul. This I know."

"How do you know?"

"Because he is good and because he himself declares it over and over."

The entrance of another man ended the interview and a few moments later Mr. Bachrach came in the shop door.

"Vell? How do tings go?"

"I have sold many records," Jeanne said proudly. "See, six of these and three of the numbered ones. There was a gentleman who came in and talked much but he bought nothing. It might be that he was lonely."

"So," the German replied. "Gute. Now, little Miss, dot iss all to-night. You vill come to-morrow again?"

“At nine,” Jeanne promised, and as she went out she wondered why Mr. Bachrach talked with such an accent when they were alone in the shop and in such careful English when customers appeared.

## CHAPTER XIV

### JEANNE GOES TO JAIL

FOR a few days Mrs. Wentworth let Jeanne severely alone. In that time she went punctually to the little shop where she spent the happiest hours she had yet known in America. Everyone was kind to her and she was made much of by all those who were the particular friends of Mr. Bachrach. They brought her gifts of candy and flowers, and with flattery and cajolery they soon laid to rest her instinctive suspicion and dislike of their German blood.

But about a week after Jeanne's mishap with the tray, just as she was leaving to go out, Peace came hurrying down the stairs.

"Wait, Miss Jeanne," she puffed. "De missus hankers to see you. Praise de Lord de last cloud has vanished off her countynance and de sun am a-shinin' in her soul once again. Dese has been powerful skeery days for me, Miss Jeanne," she concluded when she reached

the bottom of the stairs. "An' ah's walkin' on sumpin' 'sides egg-shells fo' de fuss time since de rumpus. Lawsy! Ah don' dare heave a real breff when de missus goes into one of her tempers. Trot along up now, li'l missy, and make yo' peace."

But Jeanne, usually sweet and obliging, was firm as a rock.

"I must go out now, Peace," she said. "I am due already at the office." She was proud of the independent American sound her words seemed to have. "Tell Mrs. Wentworth I will see her at lunch time."

But at noon Mrs. Wentworth sent word by Peace that she had no desire to see her, now or ever. Jeanne's sudden revolt had angered her and she was determined to have nothing to do with the child until the captain returned the following week. Then she would banish Jeanne from her home forever.

The day before the captain was due, it poured. Jeanne found she had to put all her small earnings into the purchase of an umbrella and rubbers, and the swift vanishing of the returns for three weeks of toil was a bitter pill. Business was slow that day and Jeanne

was tired, so she was glad when Mr. Bachrach sent her home at four.

She went to the kitchen to leave her wet clothes and found Peace asleep in front of the fire, her head sunk low. Jeanne tiptoed out again and up to her small room and threw herself on her bed.

She must have fallen asleep for the sudden ringing of the door-bell woke her. As she lay there, she wondered who it could be. People seldom came to the house. No one in fact except the tradesmen and the doctor and it was not time for any of them. Wondering if it could be the captain, home early, she sprang from her bed, tidied her tumbled hair and went out in the hall to peer over the bannisters.

Below her stood two men. Jeanne did not know them at all and in great wonder she listened to Peace endeavoring to explain.

“But dey ain’ no German spy in dis yere house, yer honors,” faithful old Peace expostulated. “Youse in de right church but in de wrong pew. Dey ain’ nobody here cepin’ Miss Jeanne and ole Missus.”

“It’s them we want,” interrupted one of the

men curtly. "Out of the way, old woman. Are they up-stairs?"

Before Jeanne could grasp what had happened the two Federal detectives strode upstairs and caught her clinging to the bannisters wide-eyed.

"Here you are!" one of them said laying a hand on Jeanne's shoulder. "Now take me to the old lady. We won't hurt you if you come quietly. You're both under arrest." He pulled out a paper and waved it before Jeanne's uncomprehending eyes.

The swift scene that followed was a blur to Jeanne. Mrs. Wentworth stood suddenly in her doorway proudly erect and indignantly demanding an explanation. The detectives lost their gruff manner and were instantly deferential and ill at ease, exhibiting their warrants, but firmly insisting that Mrs. Wentworth, harboring under her roof Jeanne, who was in the employ of German spies, was under suspicion and must be taken to jail until someone should bail her out.

"This is an outrage!" the old lady cried in righteous wrath. "This is an insult such as I never dreamed to live to experience! My son

is in the employ of the Government, a captain on an American merchant ship. I myself am as true a patriot as was ever born. This girl ——” she glanced disdainfully at Jeanne. “ I know nothing about her. She may be all you say. I shall be delighted to have you take her to jail and keep her there out of my sight. It is she who is responsible for this disgrace that has come to me in my old age.”

Mrs. Wentworth, quivering, was assisted to her chair by mumbling, frightened old Peace. After smelling salts and water had been administered freely, Mrs. Wentworth raised her haughty head.

“ Are you not yet gone?” she demanded.  
“ Leave my room all of you!”

One of the detectives stepped forward.

“ Certainly, madam. In a moment. But we must have a little information and you are the only one to give it. You say your son is in the U. S. Navy?”

“ He is.”

“ And he brought this girl to the house?”

The old lady was quick to see the trend of the question.

“ He did, but he supposed her to be the

French refugee she posed as being. He knew nothing of her German connections."

Jeanne suddenly flared into speech.

"I have no German connections!" she cried, tears close to the surface. "You know I have not. I am of French and American blood, as pure as yours. I hate the Germans. I only went to work with Mr. Bachrach because I —"

"You can tell your story to the District Attorney, girl, we haven't time now. Madam," the man turned once again to Mrs. Wentworth, "I am sorry to distress you. I believe there has been a mistake and you are not to blame, but my orders were to bring you both before the District Attorney. If you will get your hat and coat —"

"Sir!" Mrs. Wentworth pierced him with a glance. "I shall not stir one step!" she announced. "To jail! Me! At my age! Besides," she ended with sudden flippancy, "I never go out in the rain."

"We will get a taxi —" the man began.

"You will get nothing!" Mrs. Wentworth screamed. "You will get nothing—but this!" She picked up a book and hurled it at the head

of the government agent who ducked in undignified fashion. Jeanne nearly laughed.

"You will get nothing," Mrs. Wentworth repeated, "but yourselves and that girl out of my rooms!"

And so strong was her will, so fierce her fighting spirit that in the end Jeanne went off with one detective while the other stayed on guard on the doorstep of Mrs. Wentworth's house.

Jeanne riding to jail! Jeanne under the watchful eye of an American detective! Jeanne led into the office of the Federal District Attorney and made to answer question after question, but given no chance to tell her own story in her own way! Jeanne hearing that she would be held for examination before the Federal Grand Jury! Jeanne given over again into the hands of the detectives and taken to prison. Jeanne left at last in the care of the matron and locked in a room, small, bare of aught save a cot, dark except for a wee square of light admitted through a small window high up on the wall.

Then Jeanne sat on her bed and laughed.

"It is funny," she said. "I came to

America for freedom, for love and for a home and I get imprisonment, hate and a jail. *Certainement* I have excitement. Now what to do? There is nothing but sleep possible here, and I am vairy sleepy. *Monsieur le Capitaine* will be here after to-day and he will not leave me long in this so dreary place. No, not for ten madames!"

She curled up on her bed, pulled the blankets up over her,—for the cell was damp—and slept soundly through the night, undisturbed by sound of mice or men.

She was awakened by the sound of the matron entering her room. She carried a tray of breakfast and after a few pleasant words left Jeanne to eat. Jeanne surveyed it with a critical eye, but she was hungry, for she had been dinnerless.

"It makes me to think of the days in camp," she murmured, munching the black bread and sipping the blacker coffee. "It's a good thing Madame is not here to eat this tray full. Most *certainement* it would be she who dropped the breakfast and the dishes this time! I wonder when *le Capitaine* will arrive?"

Her confidence in him was not misplaced,

for he arrived by noon. He had, for once, left his wrathy mother unmollified; had deserted her in the midst of a speech,—which unexpected rudeness left her agape—and had made all haste to the prison. Once again Jeanne was blissfully ignorant of the amount of red tape she forced the captain to unwind; the interviews and explanations; the cross-examinations, the pledges given. She fancied he had simply to enter and explain it was a mistake and straightway she would be released.

But she discovered it was not so simple a matter as that. Unaware of the proceedings he had been subjected to, she was amazed to find that, the door unlocked and herself clinging to the good captain's arm, she could not simply walk out with him through the door she had come in. She had to go back once more before the District Attorney and face again her share of the cross-examinations; but as her sincerity was unquestionable, and her story dovetailed nicely with the captain's, she was at last permitted to go out beside the relieved captain.

“It is my fault,” he said at last as they were in the street. “I should have told you never

to go in that store again. Why I did not I cannot say." He would not tell her of his first suspicion of her. "But all is well that ends well, Jeanne, and now we'll go back and face the lioness in her den. You and I together are strong enough. Eh?"

"Oh, so strong as Daniel! I am sure!" she cried gaily. "Poor Madame. I have brought her nothing but trouble. Truly I am sorry, dear *Capitaine*. It would be better for me to go elsewhere. Mama Stafford is not home yet?"

The captain shook his head. Her continued silence and Jeanne's disappointment were a secret worry to him.

"It is queer," Jeanne knit her brows. "But she will come back, *Capitaine*. Of that I am sure. One could not doubt her letters. It is just to wait. Now tell me please, what was it Monsieur Bachrach was doing that was wrong? Is it against the law to sell records?"

"No," he replied, "but it seems that he was selling numbered records and each number was a message in code to Germans higher up of conditions here in America; of government plans. It is undoubtedly by such methods as

this that the Germans learn dates of sailings of ships and are thus able to destroy them with their submarines. Probably plans for the blowing up of munition factories were transferred in this or similar ways."

"Oh!" Jeanne's face was aghast. "And I sold three of the numbered records one day when Monsieur Bachrach left me alone! Oh! No wonder they arrested me! How terrible! How more than terrible!"

It took the captain some little time to get her mind off her own unsuspected treachery.

## CHAPTER XV

### JEANNE RUNS AWAY

“DEAR DOCTOR JACK:

“It has been a long time since I wrote you. I think you do not know of my venture into the world of business and its sad ending. The day I wrote you last it was raining, and as I sealed the letter, I went to take the tray of breakfast to Madame.

“Misfortune is mine. As I reached the proud lady’s chair, I tripped on the lace of those so ugly American boy’s shoes and went crashing to the ground. There followed a scene terrific. Madame hurled a glass of water in my face. I would rather face a German than her. So great was my anger that I decided to leave the house and go to work.

“This I did—in the shop of Monsieur Bachrach of whom I have spoken. For many days I was happy. They were good to me. I was busy. I was here only to eat and sleep and never saw Madame.

“But alas! I was young and ignorant, and though I knew the men were of German blood, I believed them to be loyal to America at heart. They said so. To be short, detectives were

watching us all the time, and one other terrible day two gendarmes entered the house of Madame, demanding to take both her and myself to prison.

“Of course Madame would not go. I believe it is enviable to have a violent temper. No one dares oppose it, and one always does as one likes! But I—Doctor Jack,—I, to my surprise and amusement,—was transported to an American prison!

“I could be amused because I knew *le bon Capitaine* returned on the morrow and would release me at once. It was so. By noon the next day I was out and here I am at the house of Madame again.

“However I soon go.

“Let me explain.

“Of course I could not return to work at the shop of Monsieur Bachrach because he himself is in jail, and I would not anyway. I knew of no other place of employment. So I was forced to spend my time in the greatly hated presence of Madame.

“She spoke to me as seldom as possible, but she made me to work. I must clean her room and wash and iron her kerchiefs and shawls, and again, to my dismay, I must bring up her trays.

“This I despised to do. Chiefly because she eats so much. It made me cross as two twigs

to see her daily menu. For breakfast I have told you, always fruit, cereal, toast, coffee, potato, bacon and egg. For lunch, always soup, meat, potato, another vegetable, tea, bread and butter and dessert. For supper, always meat again, potato, cocoa, jam, toast. You can see how much sugar it would take for one day! and bread! and butter! Meatless days and wheatless days and conservation of sugar caused her fierce anger. She would be denied nothing.

“‘I am sure,’ she would say calmly, ‘Mr. Hoover would not mean to refuse an old lady like myself the delicacies to which she has been accustomed.’

“It is a small thing, Doctor Jack, and perhaps she was right. Perhaps Monsieur Hoover would say, ‘Eh bien, Madame, eat all you desire. It is the privilege of old age.’ But to me it did not seem so. The cause of the fighting soldier is to me most important. She who will not regard it first is unpatriotic. This I told her. Whereat she faced me with scorn.

“‘It hardly becomes one who is a German tool to speak of patriotism to an American!’ she declared.

“I trembled. Then without one word I left her. I write this to you now, for in a moment I will be on my way. I can no longer abide under the roof with one who insults me

daily. I have packed my best clothes in a bundle which I shall carry and I am once again clothed in my darling overalls and blouse. I have written to *le bon Capitaine* my thanks and regrets and I am sure he will understand.

“I have a little money which the Captain gave me before leaving. With it I shall buy a ticket as far as I can go. Then I shall dismount from the train and walk to the home of my new Mama. Once in her town I feel sure some good neighbor will care for me.

“Adieu, dear Doctor Jack. Without such friends as you and the *Capitaine* and Monsieur Kelly, I should be disheartened. I hope this finds you well. May *le bon Dieu* keep you safe.

“JEANNE.”

Jeanne sealed the letter, picked up her bundle from the bed and stole quietly down-stairs. In the lower hall she took a cap from the rack, stuffed her golden curls under it, pulling it low over her forehead, and then passed out of the door.

In the street she drew a long breath.

“How stupid of me!” she thought, “nevaire to have done this before!”

Her plans were well laid. First she mailed her letter to Dr. Jack. Then she went straight

to the policeman on the corner and asked him the question that troubled her. Although he had at times chatted with a little girl in a black and white checked suit and green socks, he did not recognize this ragged boy in overalls, whose face and hands were carefully smutted again. Jeanne was determined not to leave a clue for anyone to follow, so she spoke in a low voice, in careful English and merely nodded her thanks.

She boarded the trolley indicated and watched with great interest everything and everybody she passed on the short journey across the bridge. Once in New York she became confused, forgot her directions and had to appeal again to a policeman. He was gruff and curt, far too important a person to be bothered with street urchins, and Jeanne was in despair. Her wide brown eyes filled with tears and she turned away helplessly when a middle-aged woman saw her.

“What’s the trouble, my boy?” she asked kindly, laying her hand on Jeanne’s shoulder.

“Oh, will you be so good as to find for me the subway? I desire to reach Grand Central Station.”

"I am going there myself," the woman replied, "and I'll see that you don't get lost."

Jeanne was immensely grateful. But her gratitude was not enough to cause her to satisfy her companion's curiosity. To her many questions Jeanne replied briefly and evasively, though politely.

"It is so easy to get into jail in America," she thought cannily to herself. "Even when one is doing one's best. It may be against the law for me to wear the garments of a boy. I will run no risk and will confide in no one."

So it was that in the crowd of the Grand Central Station Jeanne easily eluded her helper's watchful eye, and lost herself in the throng. It took her a great deal of time to find the ticket window, but at last she stood on tiptoe before the barred opening.

"I wish to go as far up the Hudson River as I can with this," she announced pushing the change under the astonished man's nose.

"This will only take you to High Bridge," he replied. "How's that?"

"Very good," Jeanne replied, instantly, having not the slightest idea how far High

Bridge might be from her ultimate goal.  
"Thank you."

Her journey was uneventful. Jeanne sat quietly in the corner next the window, her eyes open to all new sights, her ears alert to the conductor's voice as he called out the stations. At last she had to "dismount" from the train, and once on the platform she was at a loss. She had made no plans beyond this point, but as curious eyes rested on her she suddenly decided to take to the road.

It was warm and sunny and the country was beautiful. Jeanne sniffed in ecstasy as she trudged along the hard white road, traversed so swiftly by a multitude of cars. All the afternoon she walked and at sundown she asked an old man who was driving a cart slowly along the road the distance to Milton.

"Milton!" he ejaculated, surprised. "Say, sonny, you ain't aimin' to get there to-night, be ye? It's forty miles or more."

"Oh, no!" Jeanne replied brightly. "Not to-night. I have plenty of time."

He gave her a keen look, then he pulled his old horse to a halt.

"Tired, eh? Want a mite of a ride?"

Old men were certainly to be trusted and this one had the same kindly look in faded blue eyes that the captain had. Jeanne, with a sigh of thanks, climbed in and sat down beside him.

"Oh, I am tired," she murmured.

"Been comin' far?"

"From High Bridge."

"Lan' sakes!"

His look was so long that Jeanne grew uncomfortable, but she swung her feet in a nonchalant way and audaciously assumed a casual manner.

"My automobile broke down —" she began and then caught a sight of her overalls. What would a slip of a ragamuffin like herself be doing with an automobile? He wouldn't believe it, anyway. She turned suddenly and laughed at him. There was something so spontaneous in her laughter that an answering grin spread over the old man's face.

"And if your limousine breaks down and you have forgotten to bring your pocketbook with you, you have to walk, don't you?" she ended.

The grin grew and in that exchange of smiles a friendship was formed.

"All right, sonny. No questions asked. You seemed such a youngster though, and so tired, I was wonderin'—that's all."

Jeanne in turn was touched by his kindness. She began to speak slowly, giving him as much of the truth as she dared.

"It's simply this. My mother and father are dead. I'm all alone. I lived with a—friend—for awhile. But we—didn't like each other. So I decided to go to another—friend—in Milton. And this is as far as I got."

"Jingo," he said aloud, and to himself, "a plucky little kid."

They rode a mile or so in silence. Jeanne, sitting very straight and still, fought off a desire for sleep with all her strength. The gentle jolting of the cart, the silence of the road almost deserted now in the twilight, the reassurance that the old man's presence gave her, were all conducive to slumber. Suddenly her head bumped against something. She woke with a start. Her friend had his arm about her.

"Just ketched you in time," he said briefly.

"Oh! How stupid of me!" Jeanne cried.  
"Thank you —"

"Well, 'sall right. It just settled somethin' that's been turnin' somersaults in my mind for a piece. You're comin' in to our house for a bite o' supper, and then I shouldn't wonder if we'd just tuck you into John's bed. Our John, that used to be just such a skinny little shaver as you."

Jeanne was too utterly weary to dispute him. And after all, why shouldn't luck be with her for awhile? Surely she might in all safety, without the slightest fear of discovery, accept a night's lodging on a farm way off in the country. Meeting with such goodness was an auspicious beginning to her venture and seemed to promise its success.

So she drove into the farmyard with the old man, watched him silently while he unhitched the horse and stabled him; helped him push the cart back under the shed and followed him a little eagerly, a little timorously into the house.

But her first glance drove away any misgivings she might have had. Mrs. Applegate was a bird of a woman, with bright black eyes and little swooping movements that ended in a flutter. She swooped now, upon Jeanne, before the old man's slow explanation was half out,

and her motherly hands drew the child to the well-filled table set with its red cloth in the kitchen. Jeanne was given no opportunity to talk, for the little old lady's conversation flowed as easily as a brook and while she imparted the news of the day to her husband, Jeanne ate like a starved person. When she had finished she propped her head on her hands, her eyes on the glowing lamp in the middle of the table, waiting for a chance to express her gratitude.

"Now don't say a word—not a word. You're plumb tuckered out. Don't I know? Lan', chile, you don't never need to apologize for eatin' at my house. Couldn't tickle me more. If there's one thing I likes to see, it's folks enjoyin' the victuals I spend my days a-fixin'. Now come right along o' me. Here's a candle. Watch your step—it's a mite cold up here—but ——"

Jeanne wondered how she did it. Words didn't seem to come from her head first at all. They were simply all bunched in her mouth, tumbling over each other in their effort to be the first out.

She followed Mrs. Applegate up a narrow

dark stair to a room over the kitchen. In the candlelight its sloping white walls and neat bed looked very clean and inviting. The old lady swooped upon the bed and with a fluttering of her hands opened it for Jeanne. Then from a tiny closet under the eaves she produced a pair of pajamas.

"Oh, how good you are!" Jeanne murmured.

"An' they's water in the water pitcher. Now good-night, child." She stooped suddenly and kissed Jeanne's cheek. "I know you don't like it bein' a boy. But bein' a mother and havin' had a boy—I couldn't help it. Now good-night. Sleep tight."

It didn't take Jeanne long to slip off her clothes, and climb into the warm woolen pajamas that had at some distant day belonged to another John. For a few moments Jeanne lay watching the long shadows made by the flickering candlelight leap on the walls. Then she blew it out, and with her eyes on the starlit heavens, outside her wee window, she breathed a little prayer of thanks.

The sun was high in the heavens when she woke the next morning. For a second she lay

there puzzled by her surroundings. Then it all came back to her and she lay for awhile longer thinking back over the last twenty-four hours. She was lucky. And how darling the whitewashed room looked in the warm morning sunlight. Jeanne tucked a hand under her cheek and rested drowsily.

A door slamming below her and quick footsteps moving about, startled her broad awake. In a second she was up and dressing with rapid movements.

When she appeared in the kitchen a few moments later Mrs. Applegate whirled from a hot stove to face her, approval showing in her little black eyes.

“Sakes alive! How you scairt me! I didn’t hear you at all. Well, say now, you do look better. Time? Oh, never mind that. It’s ‘bout ten o’clock. I hoped ye’d sleep till noon. Lan’ yes, I ben up since five, movin’ round here in my stockin’ feet so’s not to wake ye. What did, anyhow? Me slammin’ the door? I forgot fer just that minute. But listen to me talkin’ here and you with not a bite o’ breakfast in ye. Set down —”

So Jeanne was fed on oatmeal with the rich-

est cream poured on it she could ever remember tasting and bananas sliced over the whole. Then coffee and bacon and eggs and crullers and even then she could not make the good little woman believe she was satisfied.

“You ain’t eatin’ anything. Ain’t you well? Don’t look none too hearty yet. I say, Joe,—that your name?—you better stay here a day or so and git rested up. Pop tole me your story. You ain’t in any hurry and don’t look to me like your last friend fed you anything. What say now? There’s your room—and me and Pop’s a bit lonesome—John bein’ married and gone so far off. It’d be a real kindness to see you stayin’ around here for awhile. What say now?”

Jeanne at first could not say anything. It was so unexpected and so utterly out of her reckoning. But after all, why not? She was tired. And there was no special hurry. And if it really was a kindness to the old folks—well, she certainly owed it to them.

So it ended by her settling down in the little room under the eaves for an indefinite period. She helped Mrs. Applegate wash dishes, hunted eggs in the barnyard, fed the chickens

and pigs, and made herself as useful as she could. One day she offered to wash the dish towels.

“ You are real handy, I must say. Handiest boy I’ve ever seen. You’d a’most make a better girl.”

In her vexation at having almost given herself away the color flooded Jeanne’s face. The little old lady mistook it for anger and patted her shoulder.

“ There now, there now. Don’t get mad at an old woman like me. I didn’t mean it like it sounded. You’re a boy all right, inside, ’cause no girl would ever show the pluck you do.”

So the days passed and Jeanne’s happiness grew. But after that one slip she was more wary. She put a guard on her tongue and her actions and refused absolutely to drive off the place with the old man. It just might be that Mrs. Wentworth, finding Jeanne gone and feeling in a measure responsible for her, would start a search. Jeanne wanted to run into no danger, although in her heart she did not believe Madame capable of so much unselfishness.

But after a week of ease and contentment impatience returned and Jeanne found herself eager to be off. Every time she approached the subject the old couple set up such a series of laments that Jeanne felt herself heartless to leave them. And to their reiterated "What's your hurry?" she could give no answer. She could not tell them that she was eager to reach Mrs. Stafford's in time to prevent her discovering her disappearance from the captain's home in Brooklyn.

But the trouble was solved for her in an unexpected and not altogether pleasing manner.

Jeanne had gone up to her room early to write of this second home of hers to Dr. Jack. When approaching voices and footsteps warned her that "comp'ny" was coming over for the evening, she was more than glad she had made her escape early, but as the "comp'ny" stepped into the kitchen directly beneath her, her heart suddenly stopped for a moment altogether in her fright. Where had she heard that voice before? That deep, breathy voice blowing up words in chunks from the depths of an enormous body?

Jeanne was paralyzed with fright as the pic-

ture of the big woman and her little husband—friends of the captain's she had met in the theatre that night—rose before her. Her heart beat tumultuously, nearly to suffocation, and no greater terror since the days of the Germans had shaken her than did the words of the newcomer as they floated up the stairs to her.

"Hear you're thinkin' of adoptin' a little boy? Somebody that wandered in, you might say. Where is he? Let's get a look at him."

"He's gone to bed, I guess," Mrs. Applegate's answer came. "I haven't the heart to call him down. He's worked all day, pickin' up apples, and he's not so strong. True 'bout him? 'Bout me adoptin' him? No, but I'd like to ——"

Jeanne heard no more. She was on her feet, her shoes slipped off, and moving quietly about packing up her belongings. It was safe to stay here no longer. She was sorry to slip away like a thief in the night but as soon as she got safe to Mama Stafford's she'd write back—or come back—and explain. Oh, it was a shame to go this way, but it had to be. She simply didn't dare stay a moment longer so close to this woman who could, all in a swift

moment of recognition, give her secret away, undo all she had done and send her trundling back to the captain's mother.

It only took a few moments, for the bundle—her despised suit—was still rolled up ready. Jeanne wrote a short little note of thanks and regret that she had to go so suddenly and then with her shoes in her hands, she slipped through the dark, empty, unused front part of the house, down the wide stairs and out like a shadow into the great still night.

On the steps she put on her shoes. Then, with a heart in which joy to be on her way again was mingled with sadness at leaving such dear, good people she set out for the next adventure.

## CHAPTER XVI

### WITH THE GYPSIES

WITH a last backward glance at the low, white farmhouse which had offered her shelter and love for over a week, Jeanne skipped away into the blackness of the night.

It was hard to leave kindness behind her and the first friendliness she had known since the captain had left her many weeks ago. But at the same time it was something of a relief to be on her way again. She had with difficulty curbed her impatience and the longer she stayed with the Applegates the more closely they seemed to bind her there with ties of affection. Now, however, she had cut the knot. She had had to, and with fear unknown as yet in her brave little heart, she journeyed on her way.

The night was still. Overhead millions of stars were shedding a soft radiance on the dark earth. Close by, as she moved along the road, sounded the comfortable little chirp of insects.

In the near distance there came to her ears the booming voice of a grandfather frog. To most girls the night with its immensity and quiet, broken only by mysterious stirrings and rustlings in the animal world, would have held great terror.

But Jeanne loved it. She swung along lightly and eagerly, her face uplifted to the heavens, her spirit in silent communion with the unseen power that rules the world and makes itself most strongly felt at night. She had been through such fearful and strange adventurings with such fortunate results to herself that she had come to feel very close to a God whom she could not see or hear but in whom she had a clear faith. It was unusual in so young a person and was at the same time one of Jeanne's most marked characteristics, one that lent her a quaintness and made an appeal to older people, while it might strike those of her own age as being odd and would perhaps later isolate her somewhat from the "crowd."

How far she walked she had no idea, but it must have been nearly midnight before she turned off the main road into a near-by field.

and snuggled herself down into the fragrant depths of a haymow.

The next day dawned cloudy. Jeanne started out bravely with no breakfast, intending to beg at the nearest house. She walked two hours before she came to one and then found it closed. By this time it was raining with a steadiness that promised no let-up. Jeanne decided to wait on the porch of the vacant house.

There were no chairs, not even a rug. She sat down somewhat disconsolately with her back against the house and stared out at the gray curtain of rain and mist. Of course it was foolish to try to go on, but then, what would she gain by waiting here? Not a bit of food was to be had, and she didn't have to think about keeping her clothes dry because she couldn't possibly hurt them. Besides the sooner she got going, the quicker the forty miles would be covered.

In the end Jeanne reached the limit of her patience before the noon hour and jamming her cap well over her hair and face, she thrust her roll of clothes inside her overalls to keep them dry and plunged out in the rain with an

air of determination she was very far from feeling.

"Perhaps I'll meet a nice old man again," she thought hopefully.

But Jeanne's luck seemed to have turned. Nothing passed her that she felt she could stop except a moving van. That did halt for repairs a few moments in the road ahead of her and Jeanne, not quite liking the looks of the driver, climbed up quickly and hid herself among the furniture that was strapped on outside the closed doors. It was her first and last venture along this line. The truck went too fast for her to dare to drop off and she could not make the driver hear above the rumble and rattle. She had to wait until he paused at a lunch-cart for food before she could climb out of her hiding-place and then, on inquiry, she discovered she was many miles out of her way.

Jeanne was dismayed. She trudged back along the road she had traversed in great dejection. Darkness fell and she approached a house to beg for food and shelter. But a timid old woman, opening the door only a crack, shouted to her so violently to go away that

she turned and left before she had half told her story.

It was so over and over again. In the darkness people were fearful of a stranger. They saw only a disreputable figure in boy's clothing and doors were shut before the light could fully reveal Jeanne's face. At last she gave up and crawled under a hedge soaked through without having had a bite of food all day. The night was interminable. She woke several times, shivering with cold and feeling as though her head were being pounded in a dozen places with hard little hammers.

The next morning it was clear. Jeanne crept to a pump in the nearest yard before sun-up, managed to procure a drink of water, and wash her face and hands, and then started on her way again.

"I ought to be able to do ten miles a day," she reasoned. "And three more days will get me there. Just three little days —"

But she had reasoned without a burning sun that beat down mercilessly on her aching head; she had not figured on marching along on an empty stomach; she had not reckoned with a stifling dust that filled and choked her throat.

Somehow the three days passed but Jeanne had not covered the miles. She had begged food, sometimes successfully, as often not. If people were kind they were more than kind and Jeanne's pockets were filled for the next meal. If they were curt, the sensitive child left them, empty-handed and hungrier than before because of the sniff of good things that had come to her from the kitchen.

Not again did she get a bed to sleep in. Once she found a barn and made herself comfortable, with thanksgivings, from a sharp wind, but twice she slept in the open, suffering always from the cold of dew and dampness and sudden showers.

By the fourth day Jeanne was thin and feverish. Her courage was undaunted but she acknowledged to herself that the task seemed too big for her at present. She lay in the warm sun many hours, too tired to move even to beg for food, and as night drew near, she was attacked alternately by chills and fever.

Jeanne lifted herself on her elbow dizzily.

"I must move on," she thought. "I am not so badly off as I have been at times. *Le bon*

*Dieu* has forgotten me for a moment but he will recall, I am sure."

Through the dusk of the road approached a long procession. Jeanne watched them in curiosity. She had never heard of gypsies but as the covered wagons drew up beside the road and the inmates jumped to the ground and began encamping for the night, Jeanne knew them by their clothes and customs to be vagabonds like herself.

She watched fires brighten here and there, heard soft singing and smelled delicious soup. At last she could stand it no longer. She pulled herself up and with difficulty made her way into the ring of people.

The men were bearded and uncouth with fierce, bright eyes; the old women were hags, filthy enough to terrorize any child, but the young women were attractive in their bright colors and the babies were just like other babies the world over. Jeanne was not afraid.

She begged for food. They gathered about her not comprehending a word she said, and the babble that arose was bewildering. But Jeanne finally made them understand by pantomime and in the end she was given hot soup,

bread and potatoes, and was finally allowed to crawl up into a hot, stuffy van and nestle down in straw and bad-smelling blankets among six other children.

Days passed. Jeanne, struggling hard to fight the illness that seemed determined to overpower her, gave up trying to locate her whereabouts. Perhaps she was going right—perhaps she would be taken miles off her course again, but she was too miserable to care, and unable to make them understand if she had tried.

She submitted in a daze to various potions and herbs they brewed for her in genuine kindness of spirit, and one night—she was never sure whether her fever-crazed brain imagined it or not—an old hag, particularly loathsome to behold, began murmuring some witch's incantation over a boiling cauldron, all the time casting dark, mysterious glances on her as she lay in her evil-smelling bunk.

She had other memories, though, of her gypsy trail, other more pleasant ones though vague. There were sunlit hours in green and gold woods when a particularly attractive young wench with black curls and snapping

eyes danced to the music of a clanking tambourine; hours of creeping dusk and long shadows when tumbling babies were gathered into young mother-arms and were crooned to sleep; hours of evening blackness pierced by the leaping red flames of a huge bonfire, when swarthy figures of men moved silently about the sleeping camp and at last flung themselves prone on the ground before the blaze to guard their little village. And there were last of all the times when her sleep was broken and there came to her confused mind the sounds of stamping horses, rattle of harness, low voices of men;—and they were off in the deep stillness of the night moving mysteriously—from what to where?

Had Jeanne been herself she would have questioned vigorously. But days passed. The herbs and potions and incantations did no good, and she lost consciousness of everything,—time, her surroundings, her ultimate goal. There was nothing but pain and thirst in the world. She never knew how alarmed they became as her delirium increased and she never knew that in the dead of night she was lifted in the arms of one of the men and carried into

the heart of the nearest town where she was deposited on the steps of a hospital.

The gypsies were kind but cautious. They had discovered her disguise, recognized her beauty and kept her, hoping her sickness would pass and they could help her to her home. But as she grew worse instead of better they became fearful of being followed and accused of having stolen some child of wealthy parents. So they took what seemed to them the safest and most sensible course.

Jeanne was found within an hour and was taken into a ward where she lay among others; but none was so nameless and so friendless as she.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE NEW MAMA

JEANNE lay listless and white in her narrow cot. The nurse and doctor had just left her, their ears still ringing with her strange story. They had waited until she was well enough to be questioned; but as she talked, they sometimes wondered if she was not yet still a little out of her head,—so unusual was the tale.

Jeanne had told it all,—all, that is, excepting her connection with the German, and the name of the captain's mother. She was so afraid of being sent back to Brooklyn that she was careful to give no clue that would enable the authorities here to do so. She did, however, tell Mrs. Stafford's name, and it was in the effort to locate her that the doctor and nurse had finally left Jeanne to her thoughts.

“I am getting to be vairy clever,” she thought complacently. “If I had told of Monsieur Bachrach they would have hunted him up and—presto—all my runaway would be in vain. Now if Mama Stafford is not yet

returned they must keep me here for there is no other place to go."

She looked about her and smiled.

"I like it here. It is clean and quiet and white. But I should like better to go to my new Mama's. I begin to feel a weariness of travelling and adventure. I should like to be —what Monsieur Kelly says—anchored."

She closed her eyes and drifted off to sleep, but before she slipped into oblivion she recalled with comfort a bit of news that the nurse had given her. She had arrived at the hospital without bundle, or other clothes than she had on her back. The hated suit was gone forever.

The days went by. Lazy days of sleeping and eating and day-dreaming; days of pure physical comfort and rest for the tired little refugee. Mrs. Stafford had not yet been heard from and the Hospital Staff had unanimously accepted Jeanne's presence for so long as she needed actual medical care at least. Further than that they did not look.

Then came a day when Jeanne was allowed up in a wheeled chair and she traversed the length of the long white room, visiting wherever she received an eager or wistful

smile. She made friends, of course. Her sure sympathy and quaint, bright way of looking at life always made her welcome.

She was just being helped back into bed and was brushing her golden curls when a nurse dropped a paper in her lap as she hurried on her round of duties.

Jeanne tied her hair with her one ribbon close on her neck and propped the pillows comfortably behind her. She was tired, yes, and hungry, but nowhere near so tired and hungry as she had been at times. She leaned back a moment and closed her eyes in content. Then she reached forward for the paper and began to read until her lunch tray should appear.

Suddenly a large headline of an article near the middle of the page caught her eye:

#### **“HUNT FOR RUNAWAY REFUGEE.”**

Jeanne leaned closer and raced through the article. There it was—all of it—her history just as she had told it to the nurses! But it ended with the note to the captain, for of course her adventures past that point were not known. And of course it gave Mrs. Stafford’s name and address with an urgent appeal that

anyone who had seen or heard of Jeanne would report to her at once. Her new Mama was home and looking for her at last!

Jeanne gasped and then called out excitedly for her nurse. She nodded from across the room and Jeanne had to restrain herself until it came her turn to be waited on.

“Are you so hungry?” the nurse asked smiling as she approached Jeanne’s bed with her tray.

“Oh, never mind lunch!” Jeanne answered breathlessly. “See, nurse! Here I am! All my story as I told you! Put in by my new Mama who is searching for me! Oh, do telephone her quickly and tell her I am here!”

She thrust the newspaper into the nurse’s hand who read it hurriedly, then nodded.

“I will report this at once. Patience a little longer, Jeanne,” she added in her quiet voice, “and eat your lunch, for Mrs. Stafford cannot possibly get here for about two hours.”

She disappeared and Jeanne—well, Jeanne might have been eating butterflies’ wings. She was in such a tremor of excitement she could not imagine how she would wait. A message came back to her that Mrs. Stafford was on

her way. Jeanne's heart thumped until she was sure it would break through her skin, and after lunch she lay with her big eyes glued on the door, catching her breath every time anyone entered.

The minutes were hours—days—centuries, but at last came the head nurse in the doorway and with her a lady whom Jeanne divined at once was her new Mama. There was a nod from the head nurse in Jeanne's direction and Jeanne caught a smile from the distant figure. Then she sat up in bed and held out her arms, her face white, her eyes ashine.

“Mama!” she called in her clear sweet voice. “Oh! My new dear Mama!”

Mrs. Stafford was at Jeanne's bed in an instant, her arms about the slight little figure which clung to her so closely.

“You are my little Jeanne Lanier!”

The vibrant, sweet, low tones assured Jeanne of its owner even before the words had all come.

With a glad cry Jeanne opened her eyes and looked up into the face of her new Mama. It needed no second glance following the first swift one to assure her that Dr. Jack's Aunt

Bee was all and more than her letters and he had promised. There was understanding and a big world love and tenderness and pity and comfort and safety in her face, and Jeanne responded to it with happy tears and laughter and breathless sobs.

"We will go now, quickly," Jeanne heard Mrs. Stafford say through the whirl of emotion that shook her. "Thank you so much, Miss Ballock, for all you have done for my little girl. Dear," she turned back to Jeanne, "the nurse will help you dress and then we will go home."

Jeanne remembered shaking hands with the head nurse and then being helped into her clothes. Then she was wheeled past countless eyes, down many long corridors, until at last she was lifted safely in an automobile, and was tucked up against Mama's spotless, fragrant daintiness.

"Is it true—that I am here?" she asked at last. "And that you want me forever?"

Jeanne drew herself away and looked at her mother with wide, happy eyes.

"How beautiful you are!" she said. "I must not touch you. I am all rough and

stained. My own Mama used to wear such soft things like these. Do you know?" She paused to look at the dark hair framing a fine earnest face where goodness and sweetness shone; at the kind brown eyes and generous mouth, and flushed soft cheek. "Do you know! You look very much like my mother. She was not so tall as you—she was *petite*—like me—but her hair and eyes were like yours. I am glad that is so."

Jeanne had much to say. She felt instant sympathy and love surrounding her and she poured out her story just as it came to her, backwards or forwards, French or English, with many self-interruptions and explanations. Mrs. Stafford listened only nodding sympathetically or squeezing the little hand that nestled in hers. She was astonished at Jeanne's calm recitation of dreadful times, hurt at the understanding she showed for all fellow-suffering.

"And so—because I could not do much good, and only ate food that someone else might have,—I came away from France. It was not wrong, was it, Mama?"

"I think not, dear; at any rate, I am glad

you did it, glad, glad you left it behind. I want so much to give you back happiness once again."

"I have it already, Mama. Tell me, do you hear from Doctor Jack?"

"No, my dear, I haven't heard from him since he went to the front."

"But I have. He was safe at that time and resting. He told me to tell you so. The letter arrived just before I left. I wrote him a long one on board telling him of all I had done. He will be surprised. Is it not so? Where are we going, Mama?"

"To my home, dearest, in the country. I live just a little way from here, far from busy, bustling New York and I like it better. My home is close to the river and from your window you can see the boats come and go. We will be there very soon now."

Jeanne looked out of the window at the streets where people were crowding past.

"They are all dressed in beautiful clothes—so many in beautiful clothes. Do they know there are many who have only ragged, dirty clothes on their backs and no more anywhere? Do they know?"

“They are coming to know it,” Mrs. Stafford made answer. “You may perhaps, later, tell some people about it and they will bestir themselves to send clothes and money.”

“I should like to do that,” Jeanne replied.

Then for a long time she sat silent in the comfortable car with her feet in their ridiculous shoes curled under her, and her shining head against the soft stuff on Mama’s arm. In this way they passed out of the city into the calm peace and quiet of the country where the spring blossoms and flowers were brightening the brown world.

“I told *Monsieur le Capitaine* I could smell the spring. I told him so in the ocean. It was so. I could smell all those things growing and—Oh! How beautiful it is. But one would not know it was spring in Brooklyn.”

Jeanne liked the way her words could fall into a comfortable silence. She was always sure Mama heard and understood and it left her free to continue talking or not as she chose.

“You do not laugh at my so funny looks,” she observed, sticking the boy’s shoe out for inspection.

"I don't want to laugh, dear," Mrs. Stafford answered quietly, with a closer hug. "Will you be glad to have new clothes?"

"You bet!" Jeanne made sudden surprising answer, and at her mother's startled smile she grinned and the dimple came and Mrs. Stafford stared in amazement at the subtle swift change the smile made in Jeanne's face. "Oh, *oui*, I am learning to be a good American. I should know much slang if I talk with Monsieur Kelly much. He is as full of it as—as a stuffed pig!"

Mrs. Stafford's laugh was music and Jeanne's light spilling one was a revelation to the older woman.

"To laugh is good," Jeanne said. "It unwrinkles all your insides. It is O. K."

And again the two laughed in utter abandonment as Jeanne could not remember doing since Dr. Jack had left her.

They were by this time bowling along a broad, black road. Beside them they could glimpse the shining blue river occasionally through the trees and on the other side were beautiful lawns sweeping back to half-hidden beautiful homes.

"Do you live in a so-big house?" Jeanne queried.

Mrs. Stafford shook her head.

"No, I should be lost in a place like that. Lost and lonesome. I live in a small white cottage where —— But you shall see. There is only one thing I may tell you. That is— Katy."

"Who is Katy?"

"Katy is my old-time nurse, my cook, my laundress, my—boss. There aren't many Kates these days, so I value her. She is fat and soft and creased and rosy and scolding and good."

"I can see her," Jeanne replied. "And I shall love her. Is that all of your family?"

"That is all except James." She nodded to the chauffeur. "James is a man-katy. He cuts the lawn and grows the flowers and runs the cars and shoos away marauders."

"I shall love him too, then, if he belongs to you," Jeanne replied. "And now tell me, Mama, where have you been that no one could find you?"

"I took an unexpected trip to California, dear, on business. I expected to go straight

out and back again, so I left no forwarding address as I knew mail would not reach me. I never expected cablegrams! Of course I was delayed. The business took longer than I had anticipated and when I got back and found the cable, and the telegram,—you may imagine how I flew about! It did not take me long to get to Mrs. Wentworth's and then I found you gone.” An arm drew Jeanne still closer. “Oh, little girl, I felt dreadfully. We read your note to the captain but that gave me little clue. You might so easily have been lost. I filled the newspapers with the story in my endeavor to locate you. But never mind all that. I have you safe now. And I shall never let you go again.”

“And we are going home,” Jeanne ended happily. “Home,” she repeated softly.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE END OF HARD TIMES

A gentle sweep of emerald lawn, cut in its centre by a red brick walk, led up to the low green-shuttered bungalow that was Jeanne's new home. Two wings, on either end of the main living-room, reached out like white arms in welcome. A low picket fence joining the jutting wings and clambered over by scarlet roses, seemed to warn newcomers that only love could enter the arched gateway and pass through the gardened recess into the great living-room.

"Your home is like you, Mama," Jeanne said. "It seems to be filled with love and quietness and peace. I feel so much better already."

She went arm in arm with Mrs. Stafford through the great Dutch door, cut exactly in half across its centre in the quaint old style, into the cool gray and blue living-room. Directly opposite the door was a huge stone fireplace, a work of art in coloring. Here nestled

cosily built-in seats, low and comfortable with cushions; a stone shelf overhead held nothing but a unique tiled painting of the old Dutch ship *De Halve Maen*. The rag rug, the heavy square furniture, the wrought iron andirons and door bolts gave the finishing touches to a perfect room.

"Do you like it, dear?" Mrs. Stafford asked.

"Oh, much!" Jeanne replied. "Nevaire have I seen a house so unique. What is here, Mama?"

She ran to a door at one end of the living-room. It led out on to a low screened-in veranda, which made the wing at one end. Here white wicker furniture cushioned in gay cretonne; a glorious big swing, a table of books and magazines invited them to sit at ease but Jeanne shook her head and begged to see the rest of the house.

"There is not much left," Mrs. Stafford said laughing. "Just the dining-room and kitchen at the other end of the living-room. I wanted an outdoor breakfast room but that could not be managed so we did the best we could."

“This is as good as eating outdoors, is it not so?” Jeanne cried. And truly it was. For the dining-room, in the front end of the other wing, had five great casement windows flung wide to admit big breaths of pure air and squares of golden light. It too was in blue, and boasted a plate rail of real antique plates and a set of old furniture with caned seats and straight mahogany backs in which was laid a touch of blue hand painting. Back of this sunny room was a wee kitchen, with shining kettles and pans hung conveniently on the walls; a spotless tiled floor in blue and white; spotless blue and white curtains; spotless white sink and shining range; a spotless white cupboard filled with dainty gold dishes and a spotless, rosy Katy waiting to give the “refuge” a warm kiss on each cheek.

“The saints be prraised that ye’ve left a hathin countree and have came to God’s own,” she cried. “ ’Tis filled with spunk they say ye are. Well, if ye are ye’re not filled with much else for never did Oi see such a rack o’ bones in me whole loife. Misthress Stafford, I’ve a warm bite already. Will ye be atin’ it noo or must ye change the little darlint’s clothes?”

She cast a disapproving glance over Jeanne's attire and Jeanne suddenly spilled out her high, light laugh.

"These are all in the world I possess, Katy," she cried. "Excuse me, *s'il vous plaît*."

"Seel voo—what iver are ye sayin'? Don't ye dare be handin' any av that German talk to me. I hate them wan and all and not a worrd will Oi read of their vile doin's in the paper. Some day Misthress Stafford will be struck blind from radin' the onchristian stuff."

"We will be ready in about twenty minutes, Katy. Have you something hot to drink?"

"Yis, mum, cocoa and hot biscuits, the bist ye've ever flung your face aroound."

"I don't doubt it, Katy, but you must be careful what slang you use before Miss Jeanne. She is quick to remember it."

"I shall remember that," Jeanne said. "It is a so vairy funny one."

She followed her mother through the wee kitchen and up two steps to a door that let them on to the stair landing in the dining-room. Just twelve steps more and they were up-stairs in the low-ceiled bedrooms.

Mrs. Stafford's room went from front to

back and was the largest at the head of the stairs. Jeanne just glimpsed gray wicker furniture, a bowl of pink roses on a table desk; quaint patterned gray and pink curtains; then she was led past a shining white bathroom along the hall into her own room in the centre of the house.

"This is yours, dear," Mrs. Stafford said. "It is not so big as mine, but it faces the front. Katy's room and bath are next but she comes up the back way. You will see all the sunsets, and—come—here at this window. If you look across the road and through the stretch of woodland below, you can catch the shining blue waters of the Hudson. Do you like it?"

Jeanne's eyes were filled with happy tears.

"I have so much happiness it hurts me to breathe," she said. "This so very beautiful white room is mine? This little bed and desk and dresser? This blue rug? Oh, Mama, I love it. Always at night when I am ready for bed I shall kneel in this white window seat where I may see the heavens and thank *le bon Dieu* for His goodness to me."

There was a silence while Mrs. Stafford gave

her new daughter a big hug that answered better than words. Then she opened a closet door.

“I shall draw a bath for you, sweetheart. Wouldn’t it feel good? And after that you may look at your clothes. But you must slip into a nightie and wrapper now for you must go back to bed after lunch.”

Piles and piles of soft white underclothes new and whole and fragrant; a closet full of rainbow-colored dresses, yellow, green, blue, pink and white, a shelf where wee shoes, low and high, black, white and tan, lined themselves up for inspection,—Jeanne wondered if she had not taken a trip to heaven instead of America!

“You must not so much as peep at me, Mama,” she cried from the bathroom where she was rubbing and scrubbing herself in a glory of suds, “until I am quite ‘feenee’ as Doctaire Jack says. Well, perhaps if you would like, you may see me in my so pretty pink robe and slippers.”

She slipped into her mother’s room, a rosy, shining, happy-faced girl, with her golden curls piled carelessly on top of her head. One

had slipped down over her ear, and bobbed saucily at every movement of Jeanne's slight body.

"You're no bigger than a minute." Mrs. Stafford laid down her book and Jeanne came into her arms and curled up like a kitten. "Feel better?"

"I feel new—like—like—a just-born baby, I think."

"There's Katy ringing the luncheon gong. We must hurry. She hates to have her meal get cold."

"There will not be much chance for it to cool to-day. I am what you call starved."

A few moments later when she went downstairs, Katy's face nearly fell apart in her astonishment. For Jeanne was a new being; golden curls agleam and smoothly brushed, clung about her white neck. A faint pink in her cheeks darkened the soft brown of the beautiful big eyes. But of course it was the clothes that made the difference, for in her dainty pink silk kimono, Jeanne's little figure showed every quick grace of movement, and the little slippers revealed slender ankles and a high arched foot of good breeding.

Mrs. Stafford's warning glance checked the voluble comment about to be poured forth, and Katy had to content herself with admiring glances. These changed to looks of perfect satisfaction as biscuits and cocoa, cold chicken, fried potatoes and tomato salad disappeared again and again from Jeanne's plate.

"Soon at this rate I shall be filled out beeg," she cried.

"We hope so," Mrs. Stafford smiled. "You could carry a little extra weight, I think."

So in this home of love and peace Jeanne at last rested. For weeks she saw no one. Mrs. Stafford refused to submit her to curious glances and questionings. Of course her story had reached the papers and reporters buzzed busily about the front door but Jeanne was always in the kitchen learning some new household task with Katy; or down in the wild woodland across the shaded road where spring blossoms were lifting their faces for the warm wind's first kiss; where a hammock was slung between two great trees for Jeanne to stretch in and sleep or read; where a rope swing, hung from a great gnarled limb, sent her flying to

the leafy roof overhead and brought the laughter and color to her lips.

So the days passed.

“I live like that just-born baby I feel like,” Jeanne said once. “I eat and sleep and wash. I get the air too,—in an automobile, not a baby carriage though. Am I not to go to school, Mama? Since the long winter I have not been.”

“Not yet—not this spring, I think,” Mrs. Stafford replied. “We will fatten you first and get rid of that cough.”

The little cough troubled Mrs. Stafford though it did not bother Jeanne. It had been with her since the days in the ruined cellar and she was used to it. However, she was rather glad to have the cough because it gave her a beautiful screened-in sleeping porch all her own. Mrs. Stafford had taken the tiny attic over the front end of the dining-room and had had it transformed into Jeanne’s private balcony. Here a cot was placed, and at night Jeanne loved to close her eyes with the sound of the contented peepers in her ears and the remembrance of the starry heavens across which the moon was riding.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE FINDING OF FRIENDS

JEANNE had been in her new home a month and already was a transformed little girl. Her coloring was still delicate but it had deepened, and the white of her neck and arms was an even tan. But a bigger change than health was seen in her, for her face was lifted somewhat from its old, sad look, and more and more, as the sunlight smile came to the surface and her spilling laugh rang out, did the lines of sadness fade. In repose her face was serious and her big eyes brooding as though they were still seeing cruel things, but Mrs. Stafford did not give Jeanne much opportunity to remember.

She was constantly with her and their talk was always of the present and the future. To be sure the war was not forgotten. Mrs. Stafford did not desire that. She herself went

regularly to the Red Cross rooms where clothes were being made for the Belgian refugees; and she brought home her arms full that Jeanne might help her.

This Jeanne loved. From her mother she had inherited a skillful dexterity with the needle and her nimble fingers flew in and out over the black goods like white lightning.

"But, Mama! I do not like it that these dresses should be black," she cried. "It will not make them glad."

"I don't like it either, dear, but it is believed to be the most practical thing. You yourself probably know that."

"Yes—just the samey," Jeanne smiled in pleased content at her Americanism, "just the samey I could not bear it; so I did this."

She held up for inspection a sombre dress, on the front of which was a small touch of embroidery in red and green.

"That little spot of brightness makes a very difference," she explained. "I believe it must remain there."

Mrs. Stafford admitted that it did lift the ugliness a good deal from the garments and in the end the dresses from that town were all

brought home to Jeanne for her swift fingers to work in circles and dashes and crosses of gay coloring.

But Mrs. Stafford did not let her sew too steadily. With critical eyes of love on her daughter she would often take the dresses from her and send her running down to the woodland for a swing.

And there were many happy hours spent in the wee kitchen with Katy. Her big heart had opened to the sweet little French orphan and she was never too busy to welcome her into her kingdom. Jeanne, wrapped in a huge apron, made her first ventures into the realm of cooking and was as proud as Punch over her first muffins and her first cakes.

“But this I do not understand, Mama,” she said. “Dr. Jack”—she had learned to say it better though her J was still softly slurred,—“said that you had much money. Why then, do you not have more Katies to wait upon you? In France we too had money, but there were many to do our work for us.”

“It is my American independence, I guess,” Mrs. Stafford explained. “I do not like to be waited on, hand and foot. I like to make my

own bed, and I take great pleasure in dusting my home and bringing in fresh flowers every day. Besides I have not so much money, my dear. Don't think that. But what I have, I like to share with others less fortunate."

Jeanne came to learn what she meant by that in a strange, sweet way. She came running up to Mrs. Stafford's room one day in a flutter of unusual excitement.

"See, Mama! A letter for me. For me! And not from Dr. Jack. It is from someone in America. Who can it be? I know divil a soul!"

"Jeanne!" her mother cried. "My dear! Katy is a good woman but you must not begin to quote her conversation!"

Jeanne's high, sweet laugh spilled out. Then she dropped in quick grace on the floor at Mrs. Stafford's feet.

"Listen while I read. I cannot imagine who writes me.

"DEAR JEANNE:

"Your story has come to me through the papers and I feel very sure you must be the Jeanne Lanier whose father and mother we knew so well many years ago. It has

seemed a little strange to me that we have not heard from you, for surely you must have been told of us, but there is probably an explanation for that. Your very beautiful mother and splendid father were our near neighbors here in Bridgeton, ten years ago, and we thought so much of them. I cannot begin to tell you how I grieve with you at their loss but I had to try in my poor way to show you my sympathy.

“ ‘ I want very much to see you, dear, for I remember you as a very small girlie, laughing and gay like your dad, but it is impossible for me to journey far from our small home. My four children keep me quite busy. However, if you should ever pass by this way with Mrs. Stafford it would make me most happy to have you stop in. I imagine there is nothing I can do for you for the papers say you have been fortunate enough to find a real home with a lovely woman; but if ever there should be any small or big thing you wish to ask of us we should be very proud to hear of it for your mother’s and father’s sake.

“ ‘ Most sincerely your friend,

“ ‘ ADA JOHNSON.’

“ ‘ Mama! ’ ” Jeanne cried with uplifted, flushed face. “ She is surely the one whose name I lost. It must be.”

"I think so too, dear," Mrs. Stafford replied. "Shall we spin over to-morrow and look them up? It is not far."

Jeanne was excited and delighted. It gave her suddenly a warm, cosy home feeling to discover she had friends in America eager to see her. Dressed her prettiest in a pale blue dress and big floppy white hat she climbed in the luxurious limousine beside Mrs. Stafford the next day and they started for Bridgeton.

In less than two hours they had reached the small rambling town. After inquiries they found the right street and started slowly down its narrow way looking for the street number.

"There it is!" Jeanne cried. "There is number two hundred and thirty."

They stopped before a little shabby white house that sadly needed a coat of paint. As they passed through the tumble-down picket gate that was half off its hinges, two boys who had ceased their ball throwing to stare at the unusual sight of a limousine in front of their humble door, made an embarrassed and hasty dash for the house.

Mrs. Stafford and Jeanne smiled as they

pulled the loose door-bell, for they heard clattering feet tear up the stairs within and a hoarse voice—now squealing, now gruff—say in a stage whisper:

“Oh! Mother! It’s them! The stowaway French girl and Mrs. Stafford!”

And then the reply in a sweet, low voice:

“Oh! Steve, you will have to go to the door. I must change my dress. Show them into the parlor, dear, and tell them I’ll be down in a moment!”

“Oh, gee! Mother, I can’t!” came in a stage frightened gasp. “Make Harry!”

“Steve! Don’t be silly! You’re keeping them waiting. Hurry, dear, please.”

So a few seconds later Mrs. Stafford and a dimpling Jeanne were ushered by a blushing, stammering, awkward youth into a shabby, low-ceiled room that for all its worn furniture spelled home. Steve made a hasty exit after his murmured speech and a few seconds later Mrs. Johnson entered.

Jeanne saw a quick-motioned, bright-eyed little lady whose smile was sweet despite the weariness in her face.

“Mrs. Stafford, this is good of you,” she

cried warmly. And then both hands were put on Jeanne's shoulders and a sympathetic look of love was given her with a swift kiss.

"It is the little Jeanne I remember. I should have known you anywhere. I am so glad, so very glad, that you are safe and happy. But tell me, dear, didn't your mother or father ever speak of us?"

So once again Jeanne told her thrilling story, and during its recital the fifteen-year-old twins, Harry and Steve, edged their way into the room and stood listening with intent eyes. They were identical in looks, with their big frames so awkwardly managed at present, and their thick tumbled black hair and gray, dark, fringed eyes. There was something immensely likeable about them, Mrs. Stafford decided, in spite of their ragged, untidy appearance, for their eyes were steady and fearless and their mouths were firm. It did not take her long, however, to find a distinct difference in their manners. Steve was painfully shy and shuffled uneasily whenever Jeanne's or Mrs. Stafford's glances rested upon him; but Harry had inclinations toward sociability. He was the first to sit down, the first to send

a smile to Jeanne and the first to make a direct remark to her.

“Gee! You had nerve!” he said when she had finished.

Jeanne’s sunlight smile and easy manner as she opened conversation with him put him at once at his ease.

“I am a daughter of France, you know,” she reminded him simply. “And my father was a soldier. You are the vairy first American boys whom I have so far seen. Of course there was Dr. Jack—but he is not a boy. What is it you were playing as I came in?”

“Oh, we were just having a catch,” Harry replied.

“May we not all have a catch now?” Jeanne asked. “I desire to learn American ways and American games. Do girls play?”

“Naw!” came from Steve. “Girls are scared of a ball.”

“But I am not! Come! Show me!” Jeanne cried imperiously, and in a minute they were in the yard. The big glove Jeanne could hardly hold in her hand, and the hard ball hurt; nevertheless, with determined, flashing eyes and brilliant cheeks she stood her ground

until even Steve reluctantly gave her her due.

"But you can't throw for a cent," he said.

"That is right," Jeanne answered squarely.  
"I am n. g. with the throw."

Her funny unexpected twist of American slang sent the boys into a burst of laughter, and it was at this juncture that Mrs. Stafford and Mrs. Johnson appeared at the door. Mrs. Johnson had a small baby in her arms that she was trying to quiet with patient pattings, and a thin little girl of about nine peered timidly from behind her skirts.

"It has been a pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Johnson," Jeanne's mother was saying. "You may be sure we will not lose track of you. Jeanne's friends are my friends. You would let your two boys come spend the day with Jeanne at times, would you not? And perhaps little Margaret too."

"Oh, Mrs. Stafford," the tired little woman sighed. "That would be too good, really. I haven't had a day to myself in years; of course I'd have the baby but she's really no trouble. She's just hungry now. That's why she frets."

"Then we won't keep her from her supper

any longer. Some day next week, Mrs. Johnson, I'll send the car over for the boys and Margaret. Jeanne will be glad of playmates, I am sure."

So it came about that companions were Jeanne's next pleasure; for every Saturday through the month of May, the car was sent over for the twins and little Margaret, and that meant a day of fun for the children and a blessed day of peace and quiet for weary little Mrs. Johnson.

"I see what you mean now, Mama," Jeanne said at the end of one of the gala days, "by liking to share what you have with those less fortunate."

"What do you mean, dear?" Mrs. Stafford stopped brushing her hair to listen.

"Oh, Mama, my dear, did I not see a tremendous basket filled with chickens and vegetables and other good things depart in the car this morning? And did I not see the same basket arrive back home all empty? You are good, Mama, and I love you. Those American twin boys are nice but they are funny too, is it not so?"

"A little," Mrs. Stafford admitted.

"I shall teach them some manners, I think," Jeanne confided in her wise old little way. "Harry is not so bum at it —"

"Jeanne!" Mrs. Stafford remonstrated, and Jeanne giggled.

"I so love to make you jump, Mama. I will not say such things, truly, before your friends, but now and then it—rests my tongue," she explained quaintly. "As I was saying, Harry's manners are beginning to appear, but Steve!" She threw up her hands in dismay. "Steve gets my goat," she ended.

## CHAPTER XX

### A SPEECH AND A STORM

“WHAT is it, *cherie*? Your face is all twisted into trouble-wrinkles. Have I then been naughty?”

Jeanne, lazily lying in the big couch on the screened-in porch, thrust one slender foot to the floor to start swinging. Her hands were tucked under her cheek and her big eyes rested on her beloved American Mama.

“No, my dear. You never trouble me. But —” she sighed. “It’s the war, dear. I can’t forget it. We seem to do so little.”

Jeanne’s face instantly became sad and old.

“It is true, Mama. We do nothing. And the war goes on and on. And nothing gets any better. I wish, too, that we might hear from Dr. Jack. He has been so long now at the front, so long. Six weeks, it is.”

At this moment Mrs. Stafford was startled to see a blue-uniformed messenger boy coming up the long walk to the front door. Jeanne from her couch could not see him, so Mrs.

Stafford rose quietly, laid her sewing on the table, and went into the big living-room to receive the telegram at the front door. With trembling fingers she tore it open.

“Jack slightly wounded. Will send further news when it comes. **ALICE KENT.**”

In silence she made her way back to the porch again, sat down and picked up her work. Except for a slight compression of her lips she showed no sign of emotion.

“And the war is coming closer to us all the time, girlie,” she took up the conversation where they had dropped it. “It will not be long before the United States is in it. Did you ever think, my dear, that your good friend Dr. Jack is in constant danger?”

“Oh, yes, Mama,” Jeanne replied softly. “So often. At night as I look up at the stars I ask *le bon Dieu* to guard him, and it helps me to sleep. Even so,”—her eyes became suddenly intense and black as memories came back to her,—“even so I cannot keep back the fear always. He is there—in the noise and the hurt—and—he cannot escape forever. No one can. I wish he would write.”

"I have just had word from him, Jeanne. From his mother, I mean."

Jeanne's hand snatched the yellow slip that Mrs. Stafford held out and her eyes devoured it before her mother could finish.

"It is not so bad news as it might be," she breathed. "I think it is good news. He will be back of the lines for a time. I hope, a long time."

"Some day you must meet Aunt Alice and her daughter Beatrice," her mother said, changing the subject to drive the old look from Jeanne's face. "Beatrice was named after me and she is—why, she must be exactly your age."

"Oh, I should love to meet them both. But Montana is a long way from here, is it not so?"

"Yes." Across Mrs. Stafford's face went a contemplative look that suddenly sharpened into decision, but she put the thought from her for the present and went on:

"Beatrice doesn't look a bit like Jack. She has thick, straight black hair, big black eyes snapping with fun, and cheeks like apples. She is a great tomboy and rides her horse like a real ranchman."

Jeanne was listening eagerly, and in the interest of Mrs. Stafford's words the "war-look," as her mother phrased it, faded. For some little time they continued to talk of Montana and Aunt Alice and Beatrice, and her little brother Jim. Then of a sudden Jeanne reverted to the original subject.

"You do not bring home so many dresses for me to embroider, Mother," she was trying to remember to use the English word, for to her it sounded "more full of soft and love." "Why is it?" she asked.

"That's the main thing that distresses me, Jeanne. Our Red Cross rooms are no longer full as they were in the first burst of enthusiasm. It may be the hot weather, but even so we should not let that bother. These things are needed sadly. As chairman I should do something to stir up interest again and I've telephoned and pleaded but it seems to do no good."

"Mama, Mother." Jeanne suddenly sat up. "It may be that if they saw a real refugee—all worn and dirty and unclothed as I was—something might waken in their hearts that would set their fingers to flying again."

"You mean—you?" Mrs. Stafford regarded her thoughtfully. "It might be that you are right, Jeanne. I believe you are. You would not mind at all—the old clothes and speaking before a room full?"

"No," Jeanne cried eagerly. "If it will help to make them work and send, and work and send, I will do it. What shall I say, Mother?"

"Tell them all you have told me, dear, about your life in the relief camp from the time you first entered it until the day you were all sent forth."

Purposely Mrs. Stafford refrained from asking her to tell of her first few weeks' experience in the war zone. She had seen it set little Jeanne to trembling and she had seen her eyes grow needle-like as she recalled the coming of the Germans and the following horrors. It seemed to start her coughing, too, and all these things Mrs. Stafford wished to shield her from. For that reason she had met very, very few of the eager and inquisitive townspeople, and for that reason Mrs. Stafford was reluctant to let her speak at the Red Cross meeting. But Jeanne prevailed upon her, so a date was set,

special notices were sent out, and the time for Jeanne's speech arrived.

During the first part of the meeting when business was transacted, Jeanne sat on the platform beside her mother at the desk. Very sweet and dainty and girlish she looked, in immaculate white. Her hair had never shone more like gold and her coloring had never been more exquisite. It was the first real look anyone had had of her, and she was devoured by eyes. Of this, however, she was totally unconscious. She was listening to her mother's low voice answering questions, giving directions, and at last making an earnest plea for more workers and more work. As she began this Jeanne suddenly stepped from the stage to a small dressing-room at one side. It did not take her long to slip into the old familiar garments, washed, to be sure, but still stained, torn, ragged. She shuddered as she put them on, and over her swept the flooding memories of the days in France when she had worn these. Mechanically she pulled the cap over her bright curls, smeared her face and hands and arms with dirt and stove blacking, just as though she were doing it again in her beautiful home in

Bellebois, with the tramp of German feet coming down the street and her mother's voice ringing in her ears.

When Mrs. Stafford came to the door and asked quietly, "Are you ready, dear?" Jeanne walked past her without a word and straight to the edge of the platform. With both hands out, her heart crowded full, and her big eyes fixed on the wall at the far end of the room, she addressed her startled audience.

"It is thus Mama dressed me when we heard the Germans were coming. I hated it—to burn my so pretty clothes and get into these—but Mama said it was better so. And she was right. Because I was little and ugly I was left alone and Grandmere and I stayed in safety in the garden. But Mama—poor Mama—" Her face worked a little as she went on steadily telling how she had seen her mother work that night.

"And when we stooped over her in the dark—Grandmere and I—she was lying white and dead." Jeanne's voice was hard with hate and repressed emotion. "Then we had to hurry back to the cellar and that dirty wet

closet. It was dark and cold and we were sorry and afraid, but that mattered to no one."

Her audience hardly breathed and the dramatic little figure went on, her eyes still fixed on that distant spot on the far wall. She made these people hear the house falling down about their ears, carried them with her through the days of labor when she struggled to make a way out of the ruins; they starved with her and Madame Dupigny and Grandmere through the weeks they lived on potato stew and snail soup and water; and they sighed like one person when the Germans marched back again—and passed in retreat.

Jeanne's hands dropped. A weary little smile chased itself over her face. Her figure relaxed a little as she took those amazed and wondering people to the relief camp where so much was done for the refugees and yet so little resultant good felt. Because she was the living picture of that which she was telling them; because she was so eager to stir the hearts of these Americans, she gave her message as no one else could. Her story of the Christmas tree brought sobs to the surface and

many, many mothers wiped their eyes as Jeanne said:

“Did you ever see a baby not smile? Well, I saw three hundred not smile for weeks and weeks. I played with them. I sang to them. All did no good. But on that Noel’s day with my two little bits of chocolate and my bright Christmas tree, I coaxed a vairy leetle smile to the so sad faces of all those grown-up *enfants*. It was gone in a second—never to come again—but while it was there the heavens were opened.

“Oh, my good friends! It was wonderful to make those *enfants* smile. Can you not believe it? And I am sure, oh so sure, that the very many dresses with their spots of happy color, and the clean other clothes and the shoes you are all to send, will make that so precious smile come to stay.”

She paused, then took a step forward.

“You see me—in my rags and my dirt. Do you know? I was clean and warm and beautiful next to some of those others. I always had much because of my wonderful American Mama. These that I have on were much. Do you understand? There were very many bare-

foot on that Noel's day with their feet all blue with cold and red with blood. There were many with no coats to hug them warm. So they used their thin little arms and tried to keep the wind from blowing through them. It would be sweet," she ended, "if you could make believe to adopt some little girl like me, and keep her as Mama kept me, clothed and fed and—best thing of all—warm in her heart. The warmth in the heart keeps a smile there, even if it does not always creep out to the face."

So ended Jeanne's speech, and as she made her way to the dressing-room again, there was absolute silence. It was at last broken by a smothered sob, then the stirrings of a people too moved to speak. And from that day on, it was never necessary for Mrs. Stafford to plead again for workers.

It was the day after Jeanne's first public speech—the last Saturday in May—and the Johnson twins, with little Margaret, were at Mrs. Stafford's beautiful home for the day.

"Now what shall we do?" Jeanne asked, playing hostess prettily. They were all on the screened veranda, the twins tumbling in the

swing, preparatory to a pillow fight; Margaret wandering happily about, shyly smelling flowers and peeping at magazines; Jeanne in a chair. Mrs. Stafford had just left them to go to New York for the day.

"Well, don't let's stay cooped up in this place forever," Steve said. "Got a baseball?"

"Oh, I know!" Jeanne cried suddenly. "It is something quite new. Mother had it put up this morning. Come! I will show you!"

She darted out through the door in her light butterfly way and led the way across the smooth green velvet lawn to a shaded spot on the edge of a stretch of woods.

"Here!" she cried. "Tether ball! Did you ever play it?"

Both boys looked stupidly at the pole, from the top of which hung a tennis ball on a long string, and shook their heads. But Jeanne, like a flash, thrust a racquet into Steve's hands and placed him facing her a few feet from the pole. Then she caught the ball and with a swift swing of the racquet sent it spinning about in a circle, winding it up.

"Hit it! Steve! Vite! Do not let it twist

altogether up! It is for you to unwind. Ah! That is it! Now see! I hit again! It winds again. Now you—hurry!"

Soon they were breathless with the heat of the game. Jeanne exhibited a dexterity and strength with her handling of the racquet that called out Steve's utmost skill. But he was taller and could send the ball above Jeanne's head, so finally it was he who wound the ball tight about the pole and won the game.

"That's good fun!" Steve said. "Come on, Harry! I'll lick you!"

Jeanne, flushed and bright-eyed with her exercise, handed over her racquet and dropped on the ground beside Margaret.

"You must try, *cherie*," she said, putting her arm about the shy little girl.

Margaret smiled contentedly but she was happier to sit and watch the others and pick violets than play. At last the ball snapped off the string and went bounding away in the woods behind them, and the boys tore into the shady place after it.

Jeanne and Margaret followed, but hunt as they would, they could not find the ball. They wandered farther and farther in their search



Isabel W. Catey

“ Shall We Not Then Eat Our Lunch Here? ”



until at last they came to a beautiful big rock flat on top, with steps cut into the side that they might climb up.

“Oh! Oh!” Jeanne held down a helping hand to Margaret, when she had followed the scrambling boys. “Is it not beautiful here? The brook below us, the willow over us, and soft moss all about. Shall we not then eat our lunch here, nic-pic as you say?”

Margaret’s sudden laughter surprised them.

“Nic pic!” she mimicked. “Ho! I guess you mean picnic?”

“So I do. Come, Margaret. You and I will go back and ask Katy to put it into boxes for us, then we will bring it back. Will you boys surely wait here?”

The boys, who had spied a deep pool a short way up the brook, exchanged glances and nodded.

“Bet your sweet life we’ll be here,” they cried.

“Don’t hurry back,” Harry added.

Jeanne nodded.

“You will be hungry when we arrive back. So long!”

She and Margaret scrambled down the rock

again and along the path toward the Stafford estate. It was beautiful in the cool green woods and now and then they paused to watch a squirrel skitter up a tree and scold at them for disturbing his business; or they plucked some pretty wood flowers, or leaned over the brook to watch the fish dart by. By the time they at last reached the house it was noon and Katy was ready to scold them.

“Ah, now, Katy Mavourneen,” Jeanne coaxed, “you must not cross your face at me like that. Mother said we might have a nic-pic—picnic lunch; did she not tell you so?”

“Niver a worrd,” growled Katy, slapping down oiled paper and white boxes preparatory to tucking away in them piles of white sandwiches. “An’ me wid the table all set.”

“I’ll unset it!” Jeanne cried gaily. “It will be no throuble at all, at all!”

Katy, somewhat mollified by Jeanne’s insistent gaiety and funny French brogue, ceased her scolding, and by the time the lunch was packed away and the thermos bottles filled with cold lemonade, she was smiling again.

Jeanne and Margaret found the boys at the big rock rubbing their dripping heads vigor-

ously with their handkerchiefs. This lofty dampness, as it were, and a few undone buttons and half-laced shoes indicated a hasty but highly enjoyable swim.

Jeanne spread a cloth on the flat rock top and laid out Katy's bountiful lunch daintily. Steve made a sudden grab and filled both hands, whereat Jeanne's eyes blazed.

"Steve!" she cried. And something in her tone brought the boy's eyes to hers in sullen reluctance.

"You will put those back!" Jeanne commanded in tense anger. "You act like those pigs of Boches that my Mama waited upon!"

There was a white silence during which Harry watched slyly to see if his "boob of a brother would mind the skirt," and Margaret stared in half fright. At last Steve's color mounted as he laid the sandwiches back on their piles.

"Don't you ever call me such a thing again," he growled.

Jeanne's sunlight smile chased away her dark anger.

"Don't make me, Steve," she said. Then

she quickly caught up the pile of sandwiches and passed them to Margaret and the twins.

Every scrap and crumb soon disappeared, and Jeanne and Margaret cleaned up the papers and rubbish that was left and gave it to the boys to bury.

“There now!” Jeanne sighed contentedly. “All is clean. But is it not hot?” She wiped her hot face with her handkerchief that she had wet in the pool.

“Let’s go in wading,” Harry suggested. “Up the brook as far as it goes.”

“Ooh!” Jeanne’s little gasp made them laugh. “It would be vairy much fun. Could we?”

“Why not?” Steve suited his actions to his words and in a moment he and Bob were knee deep in the water.

“Leave your shoes and things here,” Harry commanded. “We’ll come back for ‘em.”

In a minute Jeanne and Margaret, with skirts held tight above their knees, were sliding their white feet into the delicious cool water and following the boys. The bed of the brook was sometimes pebbly, sometimes sandy. At the pools they had to climb out to the mossy

bank starred over with pale flowers and skirt them. There were stretches when they could leap from flat rock to flat rock, pretending that the shallow foamy water was a deep, treacherous river. Jeanne loved it and in the fun of it they did not notice the gradual darkening of the woods, until a peal of thunder startled them.

“Hello!” Steve straightened up and looked about. “Gee! It’s black as Egypt. There’s a pippin of a storm coming. About face!”

“Couldn’t we go quicker on shore?” Jeanne asked.

Steve, who had taken command of the expedition, shook his head.

“Nope! Haven’t any idea where the path is, and we’d only waste time and maybe get lost. Besides there’d be snakes and prickers and things. We’ll stick to the brook and hope for the best.”

At his words Margaret began to whimper and Harry, with a growl at his thoughtless brother, swung her up on his shoulders.

“Don’t you worry, kid,” he reassured her. “We’ll be back long before the storm gets here.”

Jeanne said no word but followed as swiftly as she could the sure-footed boys. Unfortunately her feet were tender while theirs were not, and gradually the distance widened between them. Jeanne set her lips and would not cry out, though the thunder was constant and the lightning a startling streak through the black woods.

“Hey! Jeanne!” Harry called once. “Where are you? Hurry up!”

“I am all right!” she answered. “Just behind the bend I am. Go on! Get Margaret home.”

Overhead the wind was beginning to rush through the woods, bending the mighty trees and whipping their branches about like feathers. The lightning was so vivid that the blackness following was blinding and Jeanne had to wait until the next flash could light her on her way. Her feet were very sore. One was bleeding, and she stumbled and struck her knee against a sharp rock. The pain of that did force a cry from her but the boys were by now so far ahead they could not hear her above the roar of the wind and the crash of thunder.

“The rock!” Jeanne whispered to herself. “It must have moved itself. Surely I should be at the rock by now.”

There came a terrible bolt of white lightning; a deafening crash of thunder. Jeanne tingled all over but before the big tree crashed down on her she saw she was at the edge of the deep pool where the boys had had their swim, and somehow she scrambled up to the bank and threw herself flat. In less time than it takes to tell it, she was pinned fast under the foliage of a huge uprooted tree and the rain was peltting down in gray sheets about her.

It was here that Steve found her. When they got to the edge of the woods he had sent Harry on to the house with the hysterical little Margaret and Steve retraced his steps to find Jeanne. He hallooed mightily but Jeanne’s little cry could not be heard in answer, and when he came to the fallen tree he stood still with his heart in his mouth.

“Jeanne! Jeanne!” he cried in horrible alarm. “Jeanne!”

“Here! Steve! Here I am! Way under the leaves. Can you help me out?”

It did not take Steve long then to locate her,

and to lift the lighter mass of branches so that she could crawl out.

Then, with the thunder and lightning dying in the distance and the rain a faint mist through the trees, they faced each other. Both were soaked, of course, and Jeanne's white dress was mud covered all down the front where she had lain. She was a sorry sight, but Steve hardly heeded that. It was her eyes, her big brown eyes so serenely regarding him, that surprised him.

"You weren't scared a bit," he said in a wondering tone.

"But no," Jeanne said simply.

Steve could find no words for his amazement. In utter silence they started the rest of the way toward home, pausing to gather the soaked shoes and stockings that were still tucked away at the base of the big rock.

At the edge of the woods he spoke again.

"Say!"

"Yes?"

"Are you hurt?"

Jeanne laughed merrily.

"You nearly forgot that, did you not? No, I am not hurt and I nearly forgot to thank you

for coming back for me. I do not like to lie in the mud." She shivered a little. "I have done it so much."

"You're all right," Steve grunted, voicing his admiration with difficulty.

"And you ——" Jeanne turned toward him swiftly with muddy hands outheld. "You are not like a Boche at all. I should not have said that. I beg your pardon. You are an American gentleman, helping a lady in distress."

Steve wanted to growl out "Rot!" but he hesitated to hurt her. And that day there was born in him a desire to be the "American gentleman" she believed him.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE INVITATIONS

KATY scolded them all while she was drying their clothes and helping them into clean warm things. Margaret was lost in Jeanne's dress while the boys were decked out in bloomers and middy blouses of hers and pranced about in foolish fashion, bringing the smiles back to Margaret's white face.

It was thus that Mrs. Stafford found them when she drove back in the late afternoon; and the story, barely told as it was by the children, made her catch Jeanne close to her in a spasm of fear. When the Johnsons were once again dressed in their own clothes, washed and pressed by the good Katy, and started in the limousine back toward home, Mrs. Stafford sat in the big swing with Jeanne cuddled like a kitten next her.

“Storms and tempests seem to keep coming your way, don’t they?” Mrs. Stafford passed

her hand over Jeanne's soft curls praying that no more might come across the little girl's path. "Were you afraid?"

"But, no," Jeanne replied, her eyes on the sunset sky. "I think,"—she said, finding her words slowly—"I think people are afraid who do not feel God near. I feel Him near—always. He has always been near since He took Mama and Grandmere and I do not fear to have Him take me whenever He thinks. Besides,—I thought how little a thing the thunder was and the lightning, compared to the roarings and crashings of guns at the front where Doctaire Zhack is. He has it all the time—like that. And he is not afraid. I wish his mother would write us or he would. I wish to know if he is better."

"We'll hear soon," Mrs. Stafford said. "I am sure."

And they sat in silence for a space watching the glowing sky fade to amethyst. At last Mrs. Stafford spoke.

"I have thought of a plan, my dear, and I hope you will like it. You must tell me how you feel about it."

"Your plans are always beautiful, Mother."

Jeanne reached up a hand to pat her mother's cheek and Mrs. Stafford caught it in a swift kiss.

"It gets so hot here—so terribly hot in the summer," she began. "I do not want to keep you here. I have a cottage in Vermont on a beautiful little lake and I thought I would take you and Katy up there."

Jeanne clapped her hands.

"When to go?" she cried eagerly.

"The first of June, next week. Should you like that?"

"I like anything," Jeanne smiled. "Anything at all, I like."

"Well, that's only part of my plan," Mrs. Stafford went on. "The rest is this. It occurred to me that possibly you might be a bit lonely there without any young folks. You've become so used to seeing the Johnsons every week, and I wondered if you would like to give a house-party."

Jeanne caught her breath.

"You mean—just what?" she asked.

"I mean for us both to write to your adopted cousin in Montana and your adopted cousin in Chicago and your adopted cousin in Massachu-

setts, and invite them all to spend the summer with you in Vermont."

"But—but ——" Jeanne was rather bewildered. "Where did I get so many adopted cousins?"

Mrs. Stafford laughed and began to explain.

"I have two sisters and one brother, and they all married. Bee and Carol and Ruth are their children, all girls of your age. I haven't seen them in years, and I thought it would be a splendid way for us to get acquainted, and to have a jolly summer together."

"Mother!" Jeanne said solemnly. "Aren't you a fairy dressed up with an invisible magic wand?"

"You would like it, then?" Mrs. Stafford asked smiling.

"You betcha," was Jeanne's fervent response. "Now tell me all about them."

"Well, Bee, you know, is Dr. Jack's sister, the little horseback rider who lives on a ranch in Montana. She was named after me, and I haven't seen her since she was a baby. I haven't even a picture of her, but I am sure she is a fine, wholesome little girl."

"Beatrice Kent," said Jeanne softly. "I am sure I shall like her. Then tell me of—Carol?"

"Carol King," Mrs. Stafford went on. "She is an only child of wealthy parents. Her home is in Chicago. I saw her last year."

Jeanne waited eagerly.

"She is quite different from Bee, I fancy. A city girl would be. She is pretty."

"Is she nice?" Jeanne asked eagerly.

"Everybody is nice," Mrs. Stafford said. "All you have to do is find their special nice-ness."

"Now tell me about Ruth," said Jeanne.

"Ruth Winfield. I really know very little about her, too. I am afraid I'm a disgraceful auntie. Ruth is fifteen,—a bit older than the rest of you. She is, in fact, the oldest of a big family of six. I imagine it will mean a good deal to her to come to us for the summer. I only hope her mother can spare her. She is a great help, of course, with the younger chil-dren, but,"—Mrs. Stafford was musing to her-self—"if Ruth is fifteen Anne must be thir-teen and can surely do a great deal. Yes, Ruth must come."

"What does she look like?" Jeanne asked eagerly.

"Bee is dark. Carol is light and pretty. Ruth is medium, I guess. I saw her when she was ten and I remember gray eyes and fat legs."

Jeanne laughed.

"Oh, but do you think they can all come?" she asked.

"I think it can be arranged," Mrs. Stafford replied. Plans were swiftly passing through her mind as she talked. "I must write their mothers to-night and you shall tuck a note in each one to the girls. We will write them to be there by the seventh. That will give us a day or two to get the cottage cleaned and ready for them."

"Now tell me about your cottage," Jeanne begged.

"Don't you want to have anything a surprise?" Mrs. Stafford laughed. "I could show you pictures but wouldn't you rather wait?"

Jeanne jumped up.

"Wait? No!" she cried. "Why wait for a good thing if you can get it now?"

So Mrs. Stafford filled her lap with photographs while she went up to her room to write the invitations. Jeanne was constantly calling up to her a question or an exclamation, but her mother refused to give her any satisfaction.

"There are the pictures. Make of them what you can. For the rest you must wait."

And Jeanne, eager and expectant, studied them all. She had not known that Mrs. Stafford possessed a summer bungalow as well as this darling home, but there it was, a low, roomy cottage, painted white and set down in the midst of a pine grove. From a postal view taken from the lake, Jeanne discovered that all the cottages were built in a horseshoe, facing the lake, their backs to the deep woods. The cleared space in the centre was apparently the gathering place for good times. There might be a tennis court there; certainly there was a spring under a shaded grape arbor, and at the end of the open space, between the first and last cottage, was the beach with its diving-board and big central boathouse. Mrs. Stafford's cottage was apparently at the centre, at the highest point, and a little withdrawn from

its neighbors because of a brook on one side and a grove of chestnut trees on the other.

It certainly did look delightful. Jeanne, with the pictures all about her, fell to dreaming. How wonderful life was! And how lucky she was! Fifteen minutes ago she had been thinking a little wistfully that it would be nice if she had some neighbors, knew some girls her own age. Margaret was a darling, of course, but after all, still a baby, and now, all in a twinkle, she would be chumming about with three of them. It was hard to tell, but she had a feeling that she would like Bee best. Because she was Jack's sister, and there would be no awkwardness in the first beginnings of conversation. They could immediately start with Jack as a common interest. Still, the other two did sound interesting. Ruth with her big family! What jolly times they must all have! Jeanne, in her loneliness, was a little envious of brothers and sisters. They all had them, apparently, except Carol. Well, then, that would be a tie of sympathy between them. She and Carol, unsistered and unbrothered, might pretend just for the summer to own each other!

Oh! that was an idea. Jeanne, imaginative always, dwelt on that idea until her mother's voice called down to her.

"Your notes written yet, darling? Mine are all ready to go."

Jeanne jumped to her feet, dreams and pictures tumbling, and dashed to the desk. In a few moments she was running lightly up-stairs to Mrs. Stafford's room.

"Do you know," she confided suddenly, "I am so eager—and yet—the least bit afraid. Just suppose they shouldn't like me?"

Mrs. Stafford's arm went about the slight little figure and drew her to her lap.

"I have no fears on that score," she said with tenderest reassurance. "I do wonder a bit, though, if you will like them."

Jeanne's eyes widened.

"Oh, but, Mama! how foolish; of course I shall."

"Both of us foolish then," her mother said, kissing her. "Now bedtime, Jeanne, dear."

"Oh, I loved the pictures." Jeanne flung her arms about her mother. "It does look beautiful." She jumped up and stood a mo-

ment looking at the envelopes, then patted them gently.

“Good-bye, little messenger birds,” she said.  
“Fly fast and fly far and bring my cousins back on your wings.”

## CHAPTER XXII

### RUTH

THE little town of Larchfield lay breathless and still under the first summer heat. The great elms that lined the wide, shady street scarcely stirred a leaf, and the old-fashioned white rambling houses were shielded from the shimmering waves of hot air and sun by close-shut green blinds.

The only sounds that broke the stillness were the occasional shouts of boys and the postman's shrill whistle. As he came down the avenue one door was opened and a girl came out on the leaning veranda and sat on the top step. She rested her elbows on her knees and her chin in her hands and stared listlessly at the dull world.

For to Ruth Winfield the world had always been dull. There had always been dishes and dusting; always a new baby's wail; always a skimping to make old clothes into new; always the house needing new paint; fresh curtains;

props under the shaky porch, new gutter pipes where the rain burst through holes and made big pools in the yard below; always the struggle and failure to keep up appearances, and the surreptitious helps from well-meaning friends whom Ruth longed to scorch with the pride that was in her.

She sighed and watched the postman turn in at the next gate. He probably wouldn't stop here. If he did there would only be bills. There were always bills. Why couldn't something happen to her as it did to girls in books? He was turning in here after all. She held up her hand for the three letters he handed her, then sat on without glancing down at them.

“Ruth!”

It was her mother's voice querulous from overwork and over-fatigue. She followed her voice to the door and stood there flat-figured, with hair drawn back in a tight knot,—the quickest way,—and an apron covering her dress.

“Any mail? You haven't done the dusting yet, and there's cake to be baked.”

“Why can't Anne dust? She never does a thing,” Ruth complained, rising heavily and

pushing her straight damp hair back in an ugly way from her face. It was a plain face, settled into dull lines, with only fine gray eyes to lift it from commonness. She, too, wore an apron which did not conceal her dumpy square figure.

"Anne has made all the beds," her mother replied. "And she's tending baby Ned. She's doing all she can. Hurry now. We're way behind our work. What's the mail?"

"It's too hot to work," Ruth said, moving through the door as she handed her mother the letters. "It's too hot to eat. Who wants cake?"

She went through the narrow dark hall into the kitchen at the back while her mother dropped wearily on a chair and glanced at the letters in her hand. Two bills,—the doctor's and the plumber's. They had been sent three times. Mrs. Winfield sighed and then glanced at the third envelope. From Beatrice Stafford! What was she writing about? A twinge of bitterness swept over Mrs. Winfield. Why was it Bee had always had the luck? More education and more money all through life. Every time she heard from her, which was

about once a month, there swept through her this same jealousy. It wasn't fair for some people to have all the work and others all the fun. Probably there was a check in here. Bee always enclosed one, for it was always somebody's birthday, and she never forgot. She would tell them to get something for the kiddy; then, as though she had forgotten, she would later send a real present herself. The check always helped pay bills. Mrs. Winfield was grateful but she hated it. It was hard always to accept.

She thrust her finger under the flap and ripped it open. Yes, there was a check. What could be her excuse this time? It was nobody's birthday. She looked at the amount and gasped. Then sat up and began reading the letter.

“ DEAR GRACE:

“ My days have been so full I have not had a chance to write you, but to-night I find an hour free. I hope baby Ned is quite over his colic now and the other children are well.

“ You remember, of course, my writing you of the unexpected appearance of my little French orphan, Jeanne? Ever since she has

been here I have been busy trying to build up her strength and health which had undergone such abuse. She is now quite a wiry child, looking as I would have her, and I am pleased. She has, however, a persistent little cough, of which she is quite unconscious, which distresses me. I have consulted the doctor and he advises the hills of Vermont for her for the summer.

"It is of this I want to write you. It is time Jeanne had young companionship. I have kept her from the curious people in town here, but I do not want to isolate her too completely. I conceived the idea of having your Ruth and Beatrice Kent and Carol King spend the summer with us and I hope we can manage to arrange it.

"I realized, of course, that you cannot spare Ruth through the hot months unless you get someone to take her place. For that reason I am enclosing a check to cover the expenses of a maid. It will be a favor to me if you will accept it, for I am most eager for Jeanne to meet her newly adopted cousins. Doubtless, too, a change of air will benefit Ruth.

"Please do not feel that Ruth will need an outlay of new clothes. Lake Sunnypine is a most informal place where everyone does as she pleases. The girls will probably wear bloomers and middys and bathing suits most of

the time. We want her to come on the seventh of June, and I am enclosing her ticket. If you will put her on the train at Larchfield, there's only one change, and we will meet her at the other end.

“Drop me a line if this arrangement is satisfactory. Jeanne encloses a note for Ruth.

“Lovingly your sister,  
“BEATRICE.”

Mrs. Winfield sat in stunned silence a moment, then gradually she began to realize all that the letter meant to them. A change of scenery, of companions, for Ruth! Mrs. Winfield was ambitious and she glowed at the thought. Swiftly plans flew through her mind for the making of dainty dresses, but these she thrust aside until later. And a maid in her kitchen! That would be heavenly. To have her dishes and her cooking done for her! It meant a little precious leisure to read, to dress, to chat with the neighbors. Of course Ruth was a big help, but Ruth could not be kept at the wheel in the kitchen as a paid helper could. Mrs. Winfield had always insisted on her taking half the afternoon or the evenings for her friends.

Suddenly she called Ruth.

"Can't come! Got my hands in the cake batter!" Ruth shouted back. "What is it?"

Mrs. Winfield hurried to join her daughter and at once Ruth saw that something unusual was afoot.

"What is it?" she asked, stirred to eager curiosity.

"Aunt Beatrice Stafford wants you to spend the summer with her in her cottage in Vermont."

"Wants me!" Ruth's face was blank at the surprise of it. It couldn't be true. Such things only happened to girls in stories.

"Yes, and she's sent a check for me to have a maid while you're gone, and your ticket and all."

Ruth's gray eyes widened and became black, and color surged up to her sallow face. For a second she looked almost handsome.

"Honest? Let me see." She thrust her hands under the faucet and wiped them hurriedly on the towel and caught the letter from her mother's hands. Then she read Jeanne's little note.

“DEAR RUTH:

“I am so very eager to meet my new American cousins. I hope you can come. Will it not be fun? Mother calls it my house-party, and I hope I may give you all a good time.

“Sincerely,  
“JEANNE LANIER STAFFORD.”

“May I go?” Ruth’s voice vibrated with eagerness.

“Of course.” Her mother was brisk. “Now let’s hurry and clean up here and get busy on your dresses. You’ve only got a few days to get ready.”

Ruth’s face suddenly fell into the dull lines of old.

“Oh, clothes!” she said. “I forgot. I haven’t anything decent. I’d rather not go than be laughed at. Jeanne and Carol will probably have everything lovely.”

“Don’t talk like that any more,” her mother said sharply. “You’re going and you’ll have some new clothes. This check is more than enough for a maid this summer, and your clothes will be as good as Beatrice Kent’s. Now fly.”

So stolid Ruth worked faster than she had ever worked before and her thoughts flew ahead of her fingers.

A summer of leisure! No dishes! No beds! For, of course, Aunt Bee with all her money had servants. There would be swimming and boat rides and automobile rides and —! Ruth had no imagination and she could not go beyond that, but that was enough to content her and to fill her thoughts through the next five busy days.

Something was happening in her life and she felt like a girl in a book. And, her last night at home, as she viewed her few cool, dainty dresses, simple and inexpensive, she even permitted herself to feel like the heroine.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### CAROL

A SHINING black limousine drew up at a big brownstone house on one of the most fashionable avenues of Chicago. Out of it stepped a slender golden-curled girl dressed in spotless white. Behind her followed a French governess.

Carol, with a fling of her pretty head, ran ahead of Mlle. Lazelle and pushed hard at the electric bell at the door. It was opened and she dashed in past the butler, only to turn and face her follower in a burst of anger.

“I will not have you snooping on me all the time!” she said with a stamp of her foot. “I am sick—sick—sick of you. I shall tell Mama and she will send you away!”

The Frenchwoman’s sad, weary face lifted into a pathetic smile but she made no answer. She would be glad to go. It was intolerable here with this overbearing, uncontrolled child. It didn’t matter. Nothing mattered. All her

relatives were killed in the great war and she was floating about like driftwood.

Carol had disappeared up the stairs and flung herself unannounced into her mother's boudoir.

"Not so much noise, Carol," pleaded her mother weakly from the bed. "I have a terrific headache."

"Well, if you want me to be sweet and quiet and good you'll have to get rid of that French-woman. I hate her."

"All right," her mother agreed. "She shall go to-morrow. I'll tell her so when I feel better. Sit down, Carol, and read my letters to me. I can't see a thing. My head pains so."

"Your letters are stupid!" Carol complained. "Just everybody asking for money; and club announcements and Red Cross notices." She rummaged through them in impatience. "Oh, here's one—a fat letter, from Aunt Beatrice."

"Oh, read that first," her mother said. "There'll be news in it of her adopted French orphan. Such a crazy thing for her to do. How does she know what she's getting? Jeanne may be the daughter of a jail-bird."

But Carol interrupted to begin the letter. It was like the one to Mrs. Winfield, except, of course, that no check or ticket was enclosed. And Jeanne's brief little note was like hers to Ruth. At the end Carol paused and across her scowling face flitted the first gleam of pleasure.

"I shall write at once and tell them I would love to come," she announced. "I'm sick of trailing you and Dad to big hotels where somebody watches me and dresses me every minute. This will be different."

"You want to go?" her mother asked in surprise. "Aunt Beatrice lives very simply. Only one maid, and her cottage is very rough. You won't like it, I'm sure."

"I will too," Carol contradicted flatly. "I'll like anything that's different."

"Well, we'll have to keep Mademoiselle La-zelle long enough to travel there with you. You can't go alone and Dad is too busy to leave now. Aunt Beatrice says something about Beatrice, Kent joining you here in Chicago. Do you suppose she's going all the way from Montana to Vermont for the summer?"

"I hope so. I can stand Mademoiselle La-

zelle if Beatrice is with us. Then I can talk to her and Mademoiselle can sit alone."

"I shall have to telegraph them. Oh, dear! I can't think now. Run away, Carol, run away. This letter has quite upset me." Mrs. King pressed her slender ringed fingers to her eyes and Carol danced from the room.

She ran down the hall to her room and into her chintzed wickered nest. She was afire with excitement and she dashed to her closet and caught up an armful of clothes to fling them on her bed. Then she rang for her trunk, and while she waited for it she pulled out hats and shoes and slippers, coats and wraps and all sorts of beautiful finery. At the mess of things on the bed she suddenly sighed helplessly, then imperiously summoned Mademoiselle Lazelle.

As the black-frocked woman appeared in the doorway Carol flung herself on the window seat.

"I am going away day after to-morrow," she announced. "Pack my things."

"All of them, Miss Carol?" Mademoiselle Lazelle asked quietly moving toward the bed.

"Certainly all of them," Carol replied

sharply. "I shall be gone the entire summer."

Mademoiselle Lazelle asked no questions but set to work in silence getting order out of chaos. Carol watched her, one slippers foot swinging idly as she lay against the heaped-up cushions.

"Don't you wonder where I'm going?" she asked at last, bursting with her news.

"No," Mademoiselle Lazelle replied indifferently.

"Well, you should!" Carol scolded. "Don't you even wonder if you're going with me? Well, I'll tell you anyway. I'm going to freedom, and you're not coming."

"Where is that?" Mademoiselle Lazelle asked politely. "Near here?"

"In Vermont." Carol's eagerness overcame her rudeness. "My Aunt Beatrice Stafford has asked her three nieces to come spend the summer with her. She wanted us to meet the French war orphan she's adopted."

Mademoiselle Lazelle was interested at this and began to ask questions. Carol told her all she knew, which wasn't much, just the bare outline of Jeanne's story, but Mademoiselle

Lazelle's eyes filled with tears as she listened.

"Poor little lamb," she said half to herself. "I'm glad she's safe at last. Mrs. Stafford must be a lovely woman."

"She's queer, Mama says, in lots of ways," Carol stated.

"Is she your mother's sister?"

"No; Dad's. You rumpled that dress awfully, Ma'm'selle. Take it out and put it in again."

There was another silence which Carol broke suddenly.

"You are to take us there—Beatrice Kent and myself,—and then we are through with you."

"Very well," Mademoiselle agreed quietly. She wanted to add, "I shall not be sorry." But what was the use? Instead she said:

"I shall be glad to see little Jeanne."

"I hope she's not queer and solemn like you," Carol said, kicking her slipper off. "She won't be cheerful company for a vacation if she is."

"I imagine she will not be as gay as you," Mademoiselle Lazelle suggested, "having so

recently lost all her family. It is hard, you know," she suggested.

"Yes, I suppose so." Carol's tone was unfeeling. "But they're gone so what's the use of stewing? And she's here in a lovely place, with a lovely lady. I should think it was up to her to chirk up and not gloom the whole thing. It's horrid to gloom things," she said pointedly.

"It is," Mademoiselle Lazelle said as pointedly.

"I suppose you mean I spoil things," Carol remarked airily. "Well, maybe I do. But you do first. Anyway if Jeanne is a sourball I'll stick to Bee. Mama says she's probably the best of the bunch!"

There was another silence and at last Carol rose and walked to her dainty desk. She nibbled her pen awhile and then set furiously to work.

#### "DEAR AUNT BEATRICE:

"Your letter just came this morning. I think it will be great to come see you and meet Jeanne. I am just sick to death of hotels and governesses. Mademoiselle is to bring Bee and me to you but after that I'm through with her. You can't imagine looking forward to a

whole summer of playing with girls my own age. I've never done it. I hope we all like each other. Mademoiselle is packing my trunk now. I'm bringing everything because I haven't any idea what I'll want. Just think! In three days I'll be on my way! Give Jeanne my love. I hope she won't be sad and solemn. Mademoiselle is and I hate it. All her family got killed too.

"This is a lovely idea and I'm crazy to come.

"With love from your niece,  
"CAROL KING."

"There!" she sighed, folding her note and tucking it in a white envelope. "I shall mail it now, this minute."

And she ran from the room in high glee.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### BEE

“Blow the horn, Jimmy,” Mrs. Kent said.

So the ten-year-old, spindle-legged boy seized the horn from its nail on the wall, went to the door and blew three long, loud blasts.

In a few minutes the Kent family began to gather for the midday meal. Mr. Kent strode quickly into the shed adjoining the kitchen and with a cheery word to Jimmy and his mother, began washing at the pump.

“Where’s Beatrice, Dad?” Mrs. Kent asked, pulling the big roast out of the oven and setting it on the table.

“Riding Whiz, I believe,” he answered, as he tossed Jim up to his broad shoulders and then flipped him in a somersault in the air and caught him again in his big brown arms. “She and Whiz are one spirit in two bodies.”

“Blow the horn again, Jim. She couldn’t have heard. All right, boys. We’ll sit down.”

And Mrs. Kent took her place at the end of the table while Jim reached for the horn again. Just at that moment, however, there was heard the thumpety-thump of hoofs on the earth and in a second a girl's voice outside the door called out:

"Beautiful! Whiz! Oh, you're a joy and a treasure. Wait a minute, darling. I must give you a lump of sugar."

She flung herself lightly from his bare back, dashed into the kitchen, snatched a lump from the table and with a flashing smile to the family, danced out again to her beloved horse.

"There now, sweetheart," she cooed, rubbing her warm brown cheek against his nose. "There now. You wait here for me till I finish dinner and those ever—ever—everlasting dishes, then we'll go off again."

She patted his shining neck an instant with her tanned hand, then flashed back into the ranch house and dropped beside Jim at the table.

Her father stopped his carving long enough to smile at her radiant face.

"Where you been, Bee?" he asked.

"To the edge of the sky," she replied

quickly, "and I'm starved." She attacked her plate of meat and mound of potato covered with delicious brown gravy, with a vim.

"You don't see it, do you, dear?" her mother asked smiling.

"See what?" asked Bee bewildered.

Her mother pointed to the letter beside her plate and Bee dropped her knife and fork.

"A letter!" she cried. "The very first I've ever had! Oh, who can it be from?"

She stared at it fascinated without touching it, then she seized it and tore it open, turning the pages to find the signature.

"From Aunt Beatrice," she said at last, her face pink with surprise and excitement.

"What's in it?"

"Suppose you read it and find out, kid," her father suggested. "Begin at the beginning, not at the end. You'll more likely make sense of it that way."

She made a face at him, then began reading it aloud.

"DEAR BEATRICE:

"It's a long time since I've written to my little namesake, the first time, I guess. But I've decided that I want to get acquainted

with you and my other nieces and I've thought of a wonderful way to do it.

"I want very much to have you come spend the summer with me in my cottage on Lake Sunnypine in Vermont. Do you think your mother can spare you? And do you think you'd like to leave her for so long a time?

"I am asking your cousins, Carol King and Ruth Stafford to come too, and you three with my little adopted war orphan, Jeanne, about whom you have heard so much, should be able to have some jolly enough times.

"I will enclose a note to your mother begging her hard to let you. It will be great fun, I think. I want you as early in June as you can come, and as late in September as you can stay.

"Very lovingly,  
"AUNT BEATRICE."

"Mother!" Beatrice gasped. Then she sat speechless.

It was the first time she had ever received a letter. It was the first time she had ever received an invitation. If she went, it would be the first time she had ever left her home on the mountain ranch; the first time she had ever been on a train and the first time for countless other things that she didn't dream of as yet.

"Phew!" whistled her brother Jimmy. "Aren't you in luck? To go East and see Auntie and meet up with relatives. What does she say to you, Mother?"

Her mother finished reading her enclosed note, then, looking at Daddy, she answered:

"She tells me that Jeanne, whom she has adopted as her own daughter, has been through many sad experiences. She's just Bee's age but she seems much older. Aunt Beatrice wants her to know her American cousins and she has endorsed a check for your fare, Bee. She is very anxious to have you come."

"Oh, may I, Mother? May I, Dad?" Beatrice breathed. "May I?"

"And leave Whiz?" her father teased. Bee's face fell.

"I'd have to, wouldn't I? Oh, that's so, oh dear!"

She looked doubtfully at her plate, then suddenly at her little brother Jim. His big eyes were fastened on her eagerly.

"Jimmy," she said, "would you take care of Whiz for me?"

"Would I? You just bet. Oh, Sis!" His ecstasy was wordless.

Mr. and Mrs. Kent had been exchanging looks and nods in the meantime and when Bee turned questioningly to them, they nodded.

"If you want to, girl," her Daddy said. "But understand one thing, if you go it's for all summer. No weeping and wailing and begging to come home. We've always said, 'If you begin a thing you must always see it through to the finish.'"

Bee nodded solemnly, then in an unusual silence she finished her dinner. As soon as the rest were through her father excused himself and rose to go out to his work. Jim took a book and curled up on the doorstep outside, but instead of reading he fastened his serious brown eyes on the beautiful black horse and hugged his knees in joyous anticipation of the time when Whiz should belong to him.

Mrs. Kent and Bee began scraping and stacking the dishes, and as Mrs. Kent washed and Bee briskly wiped and put away, they began talking of the proposed visit.

"How under the sun can I go that distance all alone?" Bee asked.

"Your father has to go as far as Chicago

on business, dear," her mother made answer. "He will take you there, where you will meet Carol and her governess. With Mademoiselle Lazelle to chaperone, you can go the rest of the way to Vermont very nicely, Aunt Bee says."

"What do you s'pose girls in the East wear, Mother?" Bee asked, reaching for a dry dish towel, and glancing down at her khaki bloomers and middy.

"Dresses," her mother answered, "and shoes, not sneaks or boots."

"And long hair too, I s'pose." Bee ruffled her short, thick, wavy hair that was cut "Dutch." "Well, I can't help my hair but how about dresses?"

"I'll have to make you some," Mrs. Kent replied. "Instanter. You must ride over to Bently this afternoon, Bee, and get me—well, I'll make out a list of things. Run along, now," she added, rinsing out the dish-pan and hanging it up on a nail over the sink, "and let me think what I'll want. I'll blow the horn when I'm ready."

Bee planted a hasty but vehement kiss on her mother's rosy cheek, patted the dark hair

so like her own and with a bound was out of the house and on Whiz's back.

"'Bye, Jim. He'll be all yours pretty soon," she smiled to her young brother.

Jimmy nodded and watched her speed away over the brown plain toward the distant Bears Paw Range.

Bee, on Whiz's back, lay low along his neck and smiled as the wind whistled past her. She loved the looks of the treeless, level sweep of land, brown and hard and barren to unaccustomed eyes. She loved the snow-capped range of mountains seen in the distance. She loved the blue of the sky and the sparkling air that almost looked white in its clearness. She loved the rise and fall of the strong warm body under her; but best of all she loved the spot toward which she was directing her pony's lightning feet.

On and on they raced, Bee's slim, muscular body a part of the horse she rode, until suddenly before them rose a peak that from the house seemed a part of the distant mountains. It was upthrust from the plain as by an invisible hand, and around its base flowed a cool, clear stream, disappearing as mysteriously into

the ground as it had begun. Bee guided Whiz along this singing little brook until they came to a big square rock separated from the mountain by the water. In the shade of this Bee dropped from her horse, leaving him to nibble the rich grass while she stretched herself along the bank and with one hand trailing in the water and her eyes on the restful dark of the mountain looming so close beside her, she began to talk of herself.

"I guess I'll go," she decided. "I know I will. Maybe I'll be homesick—prob'ly mos' likely will. But I guess I can stand it a few months. Who'd she say was going beside me?"

She rolled over on her back, crossed one slim ankle on the other, and pulled out the letter again.

"Carol King and Ruth Winfield. Don't know a thing about any of them 'cept Jeanne is French and dear and sad. Carol! Carol!" She wrinkled her dark brows over her snapping black eyes. "Imagine my meeting anyone that lives in Chicago! And Ruth, she's from a little town somewhere in Vermont or Massachusetts or somewhere or other. Whiz,

I don't know 's much about geography as I'd oughter," she confided. "But never mind. That's a beautiful old mountain," she ended suddenly and dropped her letter to look up at it. Its rocky sides were rather beautiful in their bareness and the sun glinted on specks in the stony parts turning them to diamonds. In the crevices clung tiny pines and cedars, their roots spreading out like long fingers to clutch a firm hold.

Bee lay so still that a jack-rabbit, white as snow, popped out of its hole in the prairie beside her and scampered over the grass and dived into another.

Suddenly through the still air came the musical notes of the horn and Bee was instantly alert. On her feet she whistled for Whiz and as he trotted up she leaped upon his back before he could stop and with a slap of her hand, they were off like an arrow for the long, low, unpainted house in the distance.

## CHAPTER XXV

### BEE AND CAROL

THE next week seemed to Bee to flash by on wings. Her mother's spare hours were spent whirring at the machine, while Bee took it upon herself to do most of the cooking, cleaning and dish washing. As the days grew fewer for Bee to remain in her beloved home it suddenly became very dear to her. The big clean kitchen with its shiny black stove; its clean oilclothed table; its nails with the familiar hats and whips and horns hanging there; its worn spot on the floor at the door; the cool, dark-shelved pantry with the rows of preserves and stacks of spotless white dishes; the long, low living-room with its mat rugs and plain but comfortable furniture; her own bedroom; her little white new bed and pine bureau; the walls with the pictures she had cut from magazines tucked up around;—she looked at them all with new eyes and suddenly knew what home was. It was a place of dear

familiarity where love filled every nook and corner.

Bee looked at her "comfy-fat," rosy mother with her heavy hair drawn smoothly up in a big heap at the back of her head and her mouth pursed crooked with pins.

"Mother," she said suddenly, "I don't know what I'm going away for."

Her mother darted a keen look at her slender daughter who stood in a carelessly graceful attitude, one hand on her hip, one foot on a chair rung, a dish towel over her shoulder. She was a little too thin and too tanned to be beautiful but she was a very vivid little person and radiating the joy of life in every motion.

"Homesick so soon?" her mother asked.

"No"—Bee answered slowly, feeling for words, "but—I'm happy here, awfully happy. Why should I go?"

"To meet new people—new ideas—new experiences. In that way you will grow."

Bee pondered this. Her mother stopped her machine, snapped off the thread and pulled out the dress.

"There, that's the last. Pull out the basting, Beatrice, while I tidy up."

When Bee had pulled out the last thread she ran up to her room and folded the dress in the little trunk that stood open under the window. Everything was ready for the start the next day. Bee had six new dresses. The khaki sailor suit she would travel in, and brown low ties and stockings to match. She had a red scarf to twist in a bow at her neck and a small tan hat with a red quill in it. She even had a new pocketbook all her own with a place for her ticket, another place for her money, still another for her handkerchief—and oh! delicious grownupness! Still another where a tiny mirror was tucked. There was also a powder puff, but Bee hadn't known what that fuzzy thing was doing in there, so she had promptly thrown it away.

There were also in the trunk a blue dress, a green one, a pink one and a white one for best. All were made the same, in one piece, with a sailor collar and loose belt, short sleeves and big pockets. She had another hat—a white washable crush hat; another pair of shoes, her beloved "sneaks," a suit of bloomers and "middys" she had insisted upon taking. Then there was a pile of plain white under-

wear her mother had deftly made; her Bible; her photo book filled with snaps of Whiz, Dad and Mother, and the two brothers.

“That’s all,” she said, shutting the lid, and locking it. Then she strolled over to her rocking chair where her clothes were spread out ready for the next day.

“It’ll be fun—fun—fun,” she murmured, and then she dashed down for supper.

After the dishes were done she went outdoors. Before her lay the vast plain with the great range outlined blackly against the pale blue sky. Overhead stars were shining, by the million. There could be heard the high, sharp bark of coyotes and now and then the roar of a mountain lion was borne faintly over the silent range. Bee lifted her face to the heavens and spread her arms wide.

“Oh, I love it here, God,” she whispered. “I love it here. It makes me feel—good all over,” she ended quaintly.

She stood a while longer drinking in the fresh, mild spring air; then ran lightly to the fence where Whiz was corralled for the night. He knew her whistle and trotted up to the fence to meet her with a welcoming neigh.

"Good-bye, Whiz dearest. Good-bye. Jimmy'll take care of you, and you take care of Jim."

She kissed his velvet nose, slipped a sugar lump between his lips, and then ran back to her room, for the start had to be made at dawn.

The novelty of her first journey was thrilling from the very start. Bee was used to the automobile, but the three hours' ride on the front seat with her Dad to Little Falls where they took their first train, seemed to have a special significance. She sat there, lips parted and cheeks matching the scarlet quill in the hat crushed down over her thick, short black hair. It seemed to her the mountains had never been so imposing; the canyons and waterfalls never so magnificent; of course it was because Bee was seeing everything more intensely, with more wide open eyes.

The thundering train; the funny sleeping-car with its appearing and disappearing beds; the dining-car with its fastened tables and obliging colored waiters offered Bee the greatest amusement. She was fairly bulging over with wonderment and her big, bronzed father

was kept busy answering her questions. Best of all she loved to sit out on the observation platform and see the country unroll before her,—miles of treeless desert; miles of wonderful mountains and miles of brown plains, flat and endless as the ocean, miles more of track where the train crept along the edge of precipices, around the foot of towering bluffs; close to the edge of whirling rivers; then cities where people thronged;—until at last they were in Minneapolis.

There was only a few hours to spare here and much of it was spent seeing the big city. Bee's mind was awhirl with all the information her father had given her as he finally lifted her for a last hug and then swung off the train and left her to finish her long journey alone.

The hours seemed endless. Eating alone and thinking alone and sitting alone—there was plenty of time for homesickness to get a good start, but just as it did Bee was buoyed up by their entrance into busy, dirty Chicago.

It had been arranged that Carol King's mother would meet her—the Aunt Helen whom Bee had never seen—then she and Carol

would journey on up to Vermont the next week. This would give Beatrice a little time to glimpse Chicago.

Her heart was thumping pretty hard as she sat on the edge of her chair the last few miles. That morning she had slipped on a fresh blue dress, for the khaki was much too soiled to wear another day. What would Aunt Helen be like? and Carol? Would she know them,—or they her? Supposing they missed each other and she should be alone in Chicago! The thought sent her heart racing, but she had no more time to ponder over it for the train had stopped and she was soon a small insignificant person among the pushing crowd.

Clutching her pocketbook tightly, her eyes black as coals under her white hat, she followed the porter who carried her bag,—followed him helplessly, feeling a sudden new insignificance and a smothering fright in her utter aloneness.

“Where to, Miss?” he queried, turning as they passed through the gate.

His assumption that she knew what she was about and where she was going restored her calm somewhat.

“The information bureau,” she replied, and

took her eye off him long enough to glance at the hurrying throngs around her. In a few moments she was left with her suitcase at her feet, beside the caged-in desk in the centre of a great room. Bee looked hastily around her at the people. All were men, except one old lady, and one mother with her babies. Neither of these could be Aunt Helen. She resolutely fought back the panic that almost overwhelmed her when she thought of the possibility of their not meeting. Then she fastened her mind sternly on other things and gazed steadily around her,—at the people; the ticket office; the news stands; the flower stands; the busy officials,—then again and again at the people. Her eyes must surely pop with looking soon, when all of a sudden she was startled by a sweet voice close to her.

“This must be Beatrice Kent, isn’t it?”

She whirled with a glad laugh, and both hands out to meet her aunt. She saw a small, little lady, dressed—as Bee vaguely saw—marvellously. Her curly brown hair was so trim and neat it looked to Bee glued into place, and not a solitary wrinkle on her anywhere!

"Oh! I'm so glad you found me!" she cried, returning the kiss of welcome.

"And Carol is here too," Aunt Helen said, stepping a little to one side.

Bee was ready for an enthusiastic rush and kiss, but the girl facing her checked it.

"How do you do?" came in a cool tone, while she extended a slim, soft hand for Bee to shake. "I'm pleased to meet you."

Bee stared. She saw a delicate golden-haired, blue-eyed girl her own size,—pretty, smiling. But her eyes were not smiling; they were cold and critical and travelled over Bee's clothes in a way that somehow seemed to scorch Bee. Then the scorch burned through and turned to anger and Bee, with her head up, ignored Carol and turned to her aunt.

On the ride up-town in Aunt Helen's closed limousine Bee left Carol quite to herself and began answering vivaciously her aunt's questions. Mrs. King, watching interestedly the sparkling, animated face in such striking contrast to the cold, disdainful one of her own daughter, was puzzled as to how this close companionship of the two girls was going to work out. But she was not accustomed to puzzling

over problems concerning her daughter and finally with a little shrug of her shoulders she gave it up. Bee was amusing at any rate. A diversion. Carol must learn to laugh, not turn up her nose.

“And what do you think, Auntie?” Bee was saying. “When I wanted to tip the porter for carrying my suitcase to the Information Bureau, I found I had only two pennies and a five-dollar bill. Wasn’t that awful? and he’d been so careful of me all the way from Chicago! I just didn’t know what to do.”

“What did you do?” her aunt asked curiously.

Bee looked at her in amazement.

“Why, I couldn’t give him five dollars! mercy! It’s the first one I’ve ever owned and it’s got to last me ages—all summer ’most. So I gave him the two pennies, and do you know? He looked down at his hand as though nothing were there at all. Then he dropped them and walked away. I hunted all over before I found the second one. A little girl was standing on it.”

Bee’s unconscious thrift and care for her

small wealth set Mrs. King to laughing, but Carol stared in wide-eyed amazement.

“Why did you pick them up?” she said.

“You wouldn’t let your perfectly good money roll around on the floor, would you?” Bee demanded.

“But pennies!” Carol’s scorn was immense. She turned to the window again, while Bee fell to studying her. How beautifully she was dressed! In a little suit of pale blue silk with a fine silk waist peeping from beneath her coat and a small blue silk hat and white socks with black slippers. Bee gasped as Carol rose to smooth her dress under her and Bee glimpsed a silk petticoat underneath. Then her eye travelled to Carol’s hands. She had taken off her gloves. Bee had never seen such white, white hands in her life, and such shiny pink finger nails. She stared fascinated. How could she keep them so white? She lifted her questioning eyes to Carol’s face and with a shock discovered that to be as white as her hands.

“What are you looking at?” Carol demanded, thrusting out her under lip in a suddenly ugly way.

"Your whiteness," Bee returned too absorbed to notice the anger of Carol's tone. "I—I—I think it's beautiful."

She put out one tanned hand and touched her cousin's hand gently. Carol shrank away from her.

"I don't like to be touched," she said, but this time her tone was gentler for Bee's admiration had pleased her. So, with a slight feeling of friendliness between them, they entered the big brownstone house where Carol lived.

"Carol, take Bee up to her room," Mrs. King said. "Show her where the bathroom is, so she may wash for dinner."

Carol immediately walked up the broad, carpeted stairs, and Bee, delaying long enough for a bewildered glance at countless rooms furnished in such luxury as she had never dreamed of, ran lightly up after her. Without a word the two marched side by side down the hall until Carol at last opened a door on the right and walked in.

"Here's your room," she said laconically, and was about to leave for her own when Bee's sharp gasp stopped her.

“What’s the matter?” she asked, frowning a little.

“Matter!” Bee’s eyes never left the room that was to be hers. “Matter! nothing. It’s perfect. Do you mean to say I’m to sleep in that bed?”

She walked toward the double bed spread over with a beautiful lace coverlet. Then on tiptoe she moved around the room, touching gently the gray stand by the bed which held a glass-covered mahogany tray with thermos pitcher of ice-water and cut-glass tumbler; the gray bureau with its bewildering array of silver articles; the deep gray wicker chairs with their gayly colored cretonne coverings that matched the curtains; and finally she stopped before an open door.

“What’s this room?” she asked curiously.

Carol stared at her.

“That’s your bathroom.” Her amazement startled her into vehemence. “My goodness! Haven’t you ever seen a bathroom before?”

“Never,” Bee replied. “What do you do here?”

Carol came forward and joined Bee at the door. Could her cousin be crazy?

"What do you wash in at home?" she demanded at last, seeing that Bee could not take her eyes from the tiled white walls and floor, the shiny, spotless tub, basin, foot-tub, the glass towel racks and polished faucets.

"We wash in a tin basin at the pump outdoors," Bee explained. "And once a week we fill up the round tin tub in the kitchen with hot water from the teakettle and wash us all over, standing up, then we have to pour it out on the ground."

Carol shuddered.

"Really?" she asked. "Haven't you ever had a bath in a real tub?"

Bee shook her head.

"But I'd love to try it here," she said.  
"When may I?"

"When may you?" Carol echoed dazedly. Surely Beatrice was crazy. "Why, I always take a bath before I dress for dinner."

"Oh!" It was Bee's turn to look amazed.  
"Every day?"

"Of course," Carol returned haughtily.  
"It's vile not to."

She moved slightly away from this queer cousin of hers.

"Show me how to turn 'em, then, and how deep to let it in—and I'll risk it now," Bee laughed, "though I can't swim."

But Carol turned back.

"Hortense is here. She'll help you. I'm no maid," she replied. "Hortense," she went on addressing the maid in a peremptory tone, "Miss Beatrice wishes to take a bath. Draw her tub for her." And she swept from the room for all the world like a grown-up woman.

Bee had turned at the words and now added a "please" and a smile to Carol's command. She hung over the tub as Hortense twirled shiny handles and watched it fascinated as it filled with hot water.

When she turned back into her room Hortense had deftly unpacked her suitcase and spread out for her her plain kimono and slippers.

"What dress will you wear, Miss?" Hortense asked respectfully.

"Oh, I'll have to put this one on again," Bee returned. "That tan one is the only other one I have that's not in my trunk and that's too awful."

Hortense made no answer but as Bee slipped

it off to disappear in the bathroom she left the bedroom with the mussed blue dress over her arm. A few minutes later it was returned, beautifully pressed and lay waiting for her when she came, rosy and glowing, from her bath.

"Now that was nice of her," Bee commented to herself. "She mended the hole in my stocking too. Hurray for Hortense. Maybe she'd take the two cents the porter wouldn't."

She hesitated, smiling a little.

"Guess I won't try it, though," she decided.

At dinner that night Bee found so many startlingly new things that adjustments—swift and rapid—were needed to keep her poise. In the first place Mrs. King was dressed in an "awfully stylish gown" as Bee termed it. She could hardly bear to raise her eyes to such gorgeousness. But Uncle Henry didn't seem to mind at all. He had on a queer thing too, a black suit with an all white shirt front, "Stiff as a board and as shiny as a hog's back." And Carol! Bee felt envy for the first time in her life. Never had she seen such an exquisite white lace dress. Bee would have been afraid of breathing if she had owned it, and a pale

pink sash, and pink hair ribbon tied in a perky bow atop the gleaming curls, and white stockings and white slippers!

There was so much to see she couldn't talk. Imagine not eating in the kitchen, but in a big dining-room where the table was all covered with a white cloth and candlesticks and shiny silver and dozens of knives and forks and spoons apiece. And there were two maids to wait on them. Two! Doing nothing but filling them up.

"I suppose this is quite different from your home, isn't it, Beatrice?" Aunt Helen asked when dessert appeared, watching with interest her face across which so many different expressions had chased each other.

"Oh, yes!" Bee's sigh was a small explosion. "Oh, mercy! yes! I—I—I couldn't talk before," she went on, "and I can't much now. Everything's so different! I've got the saying spirit in me—but I can't say anything!"

Her uncle laughed heartily.

"Eat in the kitchen, do you, Bee?" he asked. He was watching Carol's face with interest which was showing a steady stare of surprise at Bee's nods. "Off oilcloth? and help

yourselves? and get the gravy hot off the stove when you want it? Think this is all bunk?" he ended abruptly, waving his hand at the elaborate dinner service.

"I don't know what I think," Bee returned frankly, instantly liking Uncle Henry better than anybody—Aunt Helen next—and Carol not much at all. "I never had so many thinks to manage all at once. I reckon they won't get straightened out till I'm in bed—flat.

"I took a bath," she confided suddenly.

"Did you?" Uncle Henry returned easily, "and how did it feel?"

Bee squinted her eyes tight shut and wiggled back in her chair in delicious memory.

"It felt like satin," she said, then she opened her eyes suddenly.

"There are a lot of things I don't know," she said. "I never knew there were so many."

"What don't you know?" her uncle encouraged her.

Bee giggled.

"Well, for one thing, I don't know what to do with these forks and spoons in my lap!" She piled them up on the table suddenly.

"There were so many," she explained,

rather enjoying Carol's horrified gaze, "and I kept taking the wrong one, and here I am in this mess!"

Mr. and Mrs. King laughed with splendid enjoyment of this little girl, but Carol's nose went up disdainfully.

"What else don't you know?" her uncle asked her.

"Half of what I've eaten. Or how to get into bed—I'm scared to touch that spread—or what I should have done if Aunt Helen hadn't met me all right. There are some things I don't mind not knowing," she went on—"like about forks and beds and things. But that I did mind. What should I have done?"

"What did you think of doing?" Mr. King asked, curiously.

"I was going to tell the man at the desk your name and ask him your address and how to get there."

"Well, that was a good beginning," he answered. "Now how about the theatre; are you too tired to go?"

"I'm never too tired for anything," Bee rejoined, "but what's a theatre?"

"Father!" Carol cried. "Did you ever?"

Bee was getting a little tired of Carol's superior air. Suddenly her cheeks blazed and her eyes.

"Did you ever?" she mimicked. "Well, did you ever? Did you ever ride a horse bareback? Or go hunting for antelope? Or see a round-up of cattle? Or shoot duck? Did you?"

"No, and I never took a bath in a tin tub and I never want to do any of those things," Carol retorted. "I like my way of living better."

The first disagreement was ended suddenly by the arrival of the limousine. That evening was filled with bewildering sights for Bee—the crowded streets, the noise, the lights, the closeness of everything, and everybody. It set her gasping for breath a bit, and left her speechless. But when she was in the box at the theatre, she steadied again and stared with both her big black eyes at the beautifully dressed people; the orchestra and the actors.

That evening was only the beginning of novel experiences for Bee. Her uncle and she had become such pals that he appeared some

time each day with a new surprise and spree for her to enjoy. Sometimes all four of them went, but usually just the two of them—for Carol did not care for sight-seeing tours, they made her tired, and Mrs. King had other engagements. Bee was too thrilled and excited to be homesick, and the days sped by all too soon.

On their last night in the brownstone house, Bee and Carol lay each in her own bed in the darkness. Many rooms separated them, but their thoughts were almost the same.

Bee thought: "It's interesting—going places and meeting people. But honestly, if I thought Ruth and Jeanne could possibly be as horrid as Carol is most of the time, I'd rather go home. But that is quitting, and impossible anyway. And there's always the chance that they'll be heaps nicer—and that Carol will too, after I know her."

Carol thought: "If I could know that Jeanne and Ruth would be as—as—impossible as Bee, I wouldn't stir one step. But they can't possibly be. Ruth lives in the civilized East, at any rate, and Jeanne has travelled. Anyway I've said I'd go and I can't have

Mother and Dad laughing at me. No, I'll go,  
—I'll stick it through, because, after all, anything is better than another deadly summer trailing behind Mother with Ma'm'selle trailing behind me!"

## CHAPTER XXVI

### LETTERS AND OLD FRIENDS

THERE was one thing Jeanne wanted to do that last week before they left for the lake. She had written to the Applegates soon after reaching her real home in America with Mrs. Stafford and had received an odd little note very apparently written with difficulty by an unpractised hand.

“ I should feel better, Mother, if I could go see them with you and explain to their faces. Because they were so good to me, and I did disappear so suddenly.”

So, one day toward the end of May, Jean and her mother in their beautiful limousine swept into the dirty feathered yard of the Applegates, stirring the chickens to frantic flight; the sleepy cat to a sudden flashing exit. Jeanne, laughing aloud in her excitement and pleasure, jumped from the car and ran toward the little bent figure that was peering at them from the porch with her bright birdlike eyes.

"Mrs. Applegate! Oh! Mrs. Applegate! Don't you know me? Please know me! I'm Joe! the little boy you were so good to —"

"Lan' sakes!"

For as much as a moment Mrs. Applegate was speechless, but when the first astonishment was over floodgates were loosed. Mrs. Stafford, entering smilingly, seated herself in the bright kitchen, with an amused exchange of glances with Jeanne, while little Mrs. Applegate fluttering and swooping about the place, poured out all the amazement and the grief she and her husband had endured together; their various conjectures; their joy when the note came; and finally their efforts to answer it appropriately.

"But lan' sakes! I never was shucks at writin'. Too slow. But let me talk now, and somethin' gets said. My! my! ain't you too prutt? Nope, I never would ha' knowed you. Never in all this world. Jest your voice, that's all. Jest your voice, to tell me I'm not dreamin' all this? Where is Henry? He'd ou'ter be here. Jest stepped out to the barn. Henry!—Henry! I dunno. Men is slippery customers. Say they be goin' one place and you find 'em

another. Like's not he's gone out t' the potato field. But you can stay? Sure you'll stay and eat a bite o' supper with us. Henry'll be in for that, you may be sure. That's fine, then — ”

And on and on. Even when she stopped to ask a question she finished answering it for them. But Jeanne and her mother found pleasure in their visit and the little girl watched in admiration the grace with which Mrs. Stafford fitted into her surroundings. It came, Jeanne decided, from her feeling perfectly at ease herself. In that way her tranquillity was transferred to the fussy bird of a woman who soon ceased her apologies for the simple fare and settled down to a genuine enjoyment of a situation that would be mental food and drink to her for months.

At five o'clock they stood, old Henry and his wife, waving at the car until the last bit of dust had settled into the road again, and Jeanne kept her white hand fluttering until she had lost sight of them.

“ They were darlings, weren't they? ” she asked.

Mrs. Stafford smiled acquiescence.

"Very like the dear, genuine folks you will find living in the little town of Sunnapine," she answered.

This jerked Jeanne's thoughts about at once. Would there be letters waiting when they got home? Any replies from the cousins? With a bounce on her seat she hoped so.

But there were not. Jeanne was disappointed but she could of course live until the postman's whistle sounded the next morning. She could manage that because she would be asleep most of the long wait!

"Here comes the postman! Here comes the postman!"

Jeanne shouted it joyfully to her mother as she ran down to open the great Dutch door the next day. In her excitement she could only loosen the top half and the postman smiled at the pretty picture she made, with her eager, vivid face above the door as she stretched out both hands for the letters.

"You have something for me, *monsieur le postman*, I have hope?" she questioned.

He nodded smilingly. It was hard not to smile at Jeanne's eager, sunny face.

“ Two, I believe.”

“ Ah. It is joyousness, *merci*.”

She was off again and up to Mama's pretty room where the last packing was in process. Mrs. Stafford looked up from the trunk before which she knelt with an array of endless little things about her in confusion.

“ Now, Mama, I will read while you listen. This came from Ruth:

“ ‘ DEAR AUNT BEE AND JEANNE:

“ ‘ I feel a little bit as though I were living in fairyland these days, since your wonderful letter came. It seems too good to be true that I am to go away for a whole summer. Sometimes it doesn't seem right, when the rest of my family have to stay in this hot hole, but if Mother can get a maid, I'm sure I shan't mind going.

“ ‘ We've been so busy making dresses I haven't had time to write you until now. I do hope I will have things that look as nice as the other girls'. They seem awfully pretty to me now.

“ ‘ I can't seem to say things the way I want to, but please believe I am just crazy to come and awfully eager to meet you, Jeanne. Your experiences are like those in a book.

“ ‘ I will take the morning train from Larch-

field which reaches Sunnypine at 4:10 in the afternoon. Shall I look for you, Aunt Bee?

“With many, many thanks to you, dear aunt, and my love to Jeanne, I am

“Your cousin and niece,

“RUTH WINFIELD.”

“Well!” Jeanne drew a long breath; “that sounds nice, doesn’t it?”

“Very sweet.” Mrs. Stafford had read the unsaid things between the lines and knew that Ruth was choking with appreciation of this vacation but her reserve and pride rendered her unable to express herself. “I think the house-party will mean more to Ruth than either of the other girls.”

“What will we do all summer, Mother cherie?” Jeanne asked.

“Do? Mercy!” Mrs. Stafford attacked the formidable pile again. “Swim and walk and dance and row and play tennis and climb and go blackberrying and —”

Jeanne was leaning forward eagerly, cheeks flushed and eyes bright.

“I wonder if any of the girls can swim. I can’t, but I must learn. I’ll miss Harry and Steve, because, you know I like boys.”

Her mother's glance met Jeanne's honest one at this confession.

"Of course you do. All girls do. And Harry and Steve are fine fellows but they'll be here when you get back. In the meantime there are others in the United States and you may find some of them at the lake."

"Oh, I am forgetting!" Jeanne caught up her other letter. "This is to you, from Carol, I guess. It is marked Chicago."

"Open it, dear."

So Jeanne read Carol's note aloud, flushing as she read. At the end she flung it on the floor and her anger blazed out.

"What a horrid girl!" she cried. "I do not like that letter at all, Mama. I have fear that I shall not like Carol."

Mrs. Stafford continued packing quietly until Jeanne's breathing became quieter. Then a penitent voice broke the silence.

"Pardon, please."

"Certainly." Mrs. Stafford rose from her knees and moved to her bureau. "I didn't like the letter either, but I happen to know that Carol hasn't had the advantages that you and Ruth and Bee have had."

"Hasn't had advantages?" Jeanne was bewildered. "But she is rich."

"Still she hasn't had the advantages you others have had," Mrs. Stafford repeated firmly. "It's an advantage to have a large family as Ruth has, you know. It gives one an opportunity for learning self-control and consideration. An only child of wealthy parents cannot learn those things unless she is very wisely brought up, and that's where Bee has had the advantage over Carol. Bee has had a wonderfully wise mother, and I fear Carol has not, partly,—no, mostly—because Mrs. King's health has been poor. And your advantage over Carol, my dear, is the richness of your experiences."

"Oh," said Jeanne slowly, "I think I see. Then—this letter of Carol's, so almost rude, should make me sorry, not angry."

Mrs. Stafford nodded. "And Jeanne."

"Yes, Mother?"

"If Carol can begin to realize at all the suffering you have beheld, she will be a splendid one to help, for she has money. Perhaps that may be your share in the war work, to persuade Carol to see how she must give aid."

Jeanne's face was quite sober.

"Mother, I think you are wonderful. You know, some people see with their minds as though they looked straight along a narrow road that was so hemmed in by trees that it could not glimpse to right nor left, and others see with their minds as though they looked over open country, big and broad, where there is no end to beauty till the sky is touched. You see like that."

"Thank you, my dear." Mrs. Stafford was surprised at Jeanne's vision and expression.

"Is that the door-bell?"

"*Oui*, yes. Shall I go? Katy is out."

"Please, dear, I can come down in a few moments."

Jeanne ran lightly down the stairs and struggled once again with the refractory latch, and again it refused to yield, so she swung the upper half of the door open and poked her pretty face over.

"I am so stupid—not to be able to open this door—but—why—Monsieur Kelly? Is it you?"

"It surely is, Miss Jeanne. But I say, this is mean! All I can see is your face and that's

just enough to make me want to see some more."

Jeanne shook her finger at him.

"Monsieur Kelly! I am equal with you now. Not for nothing have I spent months listening to Katy's good blarney! You can no longer tease me so. If you desire to enter, you must then climb over!" she challenged him gaily.

In a second the big fellow had swung himself over the door just as Mrs. Stafford came down the stairs.

"Mr. Kelly, this is good of you." She gave him a warm hand-clasp while her eyes swiftly searched his honest, ruddy face. She found something to like there, from its merry blue eyes under the undeniable red hair, to his broad smile.

"I had to make sure my little lady was safe, Mrs. Stafford," he replied. "I felt that she was a good bit my special charge."

"You had reason," Jeanne said quickly.

"Jove! but you're looking trim and well-rigged," he burst out, openly admiring while Mrs. Stafford, with an arm about Jeanne, led them to the veranda.



“ You’re Looking Trim and Well Rigged ”



“Like your ship, not so?” Jeanne queried demurely. She spread her skirts. “All sails set now,” she added.

Tom Kelly was swift to place a chair for Mrs. Stafford and then remained standing while he blurted out his little speech in his blunt way.

“Mrs. Stafford, you don’t know a thing about me, and I want you to, because I want to come again. So I’m going to tell you.

“I’m Irish all right. It doesn’t take my name to tell you that when you once see my face. But there’s nothing wrong with being Irish that I know of. We don’t have pigs in the kitchen or eat with our knives. I finished high school but the folks couldn’t make me go to college. They wanted to—they had the dough,—but I had to get out on the ocean. It about broke my mother’s heart.”

He glanced down at his white sailor cap he was twirling in his big red hands.

Mrs. Stafford had listened quietly to this outburst while Jeanne, interested but wondering, sat wide-eyed. Suddenly the boy blushed into silence and Mrs. Stafford spoke swiftly.

“Thank you for telling me these things, Mr.

Kelly. But it really wasn't necessary. I accorded you a welcome at our home as soon as I saw you. It is more than gratitude for your tender care of Jeanne that makes me say so. We should be glad to count you as our friend."

"We always have, Mother!" Jeanne cried. "Monsieur Kelly is my second friend. Doctaire Zhack is my first."

"I'm jealous of Dr. Jack," Tom said swiftly.

The big sunburnt fellow was delightful. His admiration of dainty Jeanne was as honest as himself, and Mrs. Stafford couldn't help liking him. He spent the afternoon with them, roaming about the beautiful place with Jeanne, teasing and being teased, and at last accepting eagerly an invitation to stay to tea.

"Just to prove to you I know what to do with my knife," he said to Jeanne.

"Monsieur Kelly!" she flashed. "You are foolish. I would not care if you put your knife behind your ears! You are my friend. That is all to it! Now cease such nonsense. How is the good captain? I have written to him and talked to him over the telephone but he cannot come to see me before I go."

“Oh, you are going away?” he asked in surprise.

So Jeanne told him of the delightful summer plan, dragging him into the house to show him the pictures of the lake, and reading to him the letters that had come that day. Tom was an appreciative audience listening eagerly and asking questions with interest, until the tinkle of the soft chimes interrupted them for supper.

In the evening Tom and Jeanne strolled down to the place across the road where Jeanne’s hammock was swung between trees. Seated on the high bank overlooking the river and the dark Palisades on the other side they watched the blue pale and darken and the little stars came popping out all over the heavens; these in turn dimming as the lights of New York blazed in their full radiance all over the big city.

Jeanne had talked herself out and she sat a little wearily, her head resting against a tree trunk, her hands clasped about her knees. Tom, his eyes on the boats plying up and down and across the river, turned to her at last after a long silence.

“Not this time, because there isn’t time. You are going away to-morrow and I go the next day, but next time I come back would you write me a steamer letter to read on the trip over?”

There was something so wistful and lonely in his voice that Jean impulsively put her hand on his sleeve.

“But surely. Why, I will this time, if you wish! I could sit up a little while to-night and mail it in the morning.”

He was abashed at her generosity, his cap fumbling between his big hands.

“Oh, don’t trouble. Next time—I just thought—it gets stupid, you know. Same old trip, same old place, all the time, and then you’d have all the cousins to tell me about next time.”

But Jean had made up her mind and when she reached her little room that night she sat up fifteen minutes longer to write a letter of thanks to the “Sea-boy”—as she called him, who had been the one to bring her to America and her dear mother Stafford.

“I will give it to him as a surprise, when he meets us at the station,” she decided, and with

a smile of contentment she tumbled at last into her bed.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

The big trunk holding Jeanne's and Mrs. Stafford's clothes was locked and strapped and waiting for the expressman. Katy was bustling about in the kitchen washing the breakfast dishes, cleaning out the ice-box and leaving everything spotless and clean. Mrs. Stafford was stripping beds and locking windows and Jeanne was following her about with a little dancing step.

"I can't believe it's true, Mother dear," she said over and over. "That I'm going on another journey with you, and a beautiful grand house-party at the end of it."

"I'm sorry we can't go in the car. It's annoying to have it out of order now," Mrs. Stafford made reply as she began putting on her hat. "You could see the country so much better."

"I'm not," Jeanne said quickly. "For I like to ride in American trains. They are so tremendously full of business. And the car will follow us soon, will it not?"

"Yes, dear, in a day or two. Go get your hat on, sweet. It's almost time to go."

"A letter for Miss Jeanne," came Katy's voice from below, "and the expressman for the trunk."

Jeanne rushed to get the letter while Mrs. Stafford directed the taking of the trunk.

"From Bee!" Jeanne cried. "Oh, may I read it now? There is time?"

Mrs. Stafford nodded as Jeanne ripped open the letter, hopped up on the bare bed and began:

"DEAR PEOPLE:

"My first letter! My first invitation! My first trip on a train! My first house-party! My first—so many things! Isn't it thrilling? I am too excited to eat or sleep. Mother tries on dresses and I don't know whether they're backward or forward. I'll probably forget and arrive in bloomers anyhow!"

"Aunt Bee, you're a wonder to think of such good things for so many people. And Jeanne, I love you already. Jack has told us so much about you I feel well acquainted. You'll be glad to hear he's well again and back in service. I'll bring some pictures when I come."

“ I’ll be seeing you next week. Heaps and barrels and a sky full of love from

“ BEE.”

“ Doesn’t she sound jolly? ” Jeanne sighed happily, then hastily tucked her letter back in its envelope and jumped up.

“ I will now get my hat, *cherie*. I am all ready but for that. I hear Katy coming up, so she must be through.”

In a few moments the last door was locked and Jeanne, Mrs. Stafford and Katy were in the limousine that was to drive them to the station. Jeanne wore a dark-blue linen dress and black sailor hat and Mrs. Stafford looked at her with approving eyes. For Jeanne’s thin figure had filled out and her cheeks were prettily pink and her wistful face was lit with joy.

“ I wonder,” she said, turning to her mother, “ if Tom Kelly will be there, as he said? ”

“ I rather think he will,” Mrs. Stafford replied, but Jeanne rushed on.

“ Oh, Mother, isn’t it good to know that Dr. Jack is quite well again? ” She clasped her hands together. “ I am so happy! It al-

most hurts. Everything is resolving itself just for my pleasure."

She stopped as they pulled up at the station, and peered through the window.

"Yes! There is Tom! I see him in the door. Hello!"

She waved a hand as she stepped out and Tom Kelly approached looming above them and smiling broadly as usual. In one hand was a box of candy, in the other a huge bunch of big red roses.

"Oh! Monsieur Kelly! How lovely!" Jeanne cried, as she took the box, "and how beautiful your flowers are, Mother *cherie*! When will you be done doing nice things for me? You are always at it."

"I hope I may always be," he boomed, and then he looked down in surprise at Jeanne's outstretched hand.

"Nothing so nice as candy or flowers," she smiled. "Just the wee little steamer letter you asked for."

The color rushed up to meet his hair as he stammered his surprised thanks, and Jeanne was more glad than ever that she had done it. Such a little thing—and he had done so much

for her. Mrs. Stafford added to his confused pleasure by inviting him to run up to the lake for a few days of his leave the next time he came home, if he had time.

They had only a few moments to chatter, then Tom, with their bags and suitcases in his hands, rushed them to their train and helped them aboard.

“Can I help you stowaway on the train?” Jeanne asked laughing.

“I wish you could,” he replied earnestly. “Some day if this war ever ends, maybe—well, good-bye, Mrs. Stafford; you’ve been very kind to me and I sure do appreciate it. Good-bye, Jeanne. I’ll answer this,” he tapped his coat pocket where the letter lay.

“Good-bye and oh! do hurry! The train moves!”

It was true. Just as the locomotive began to get headway Tom dropped off the steps and ran alongside the car for a last wave to the girl he had helped to happiness. In a moment or two his rosy, smiling face was out of sight and Jeanne settled back to happy day-dreams of her house-party in Vermont.

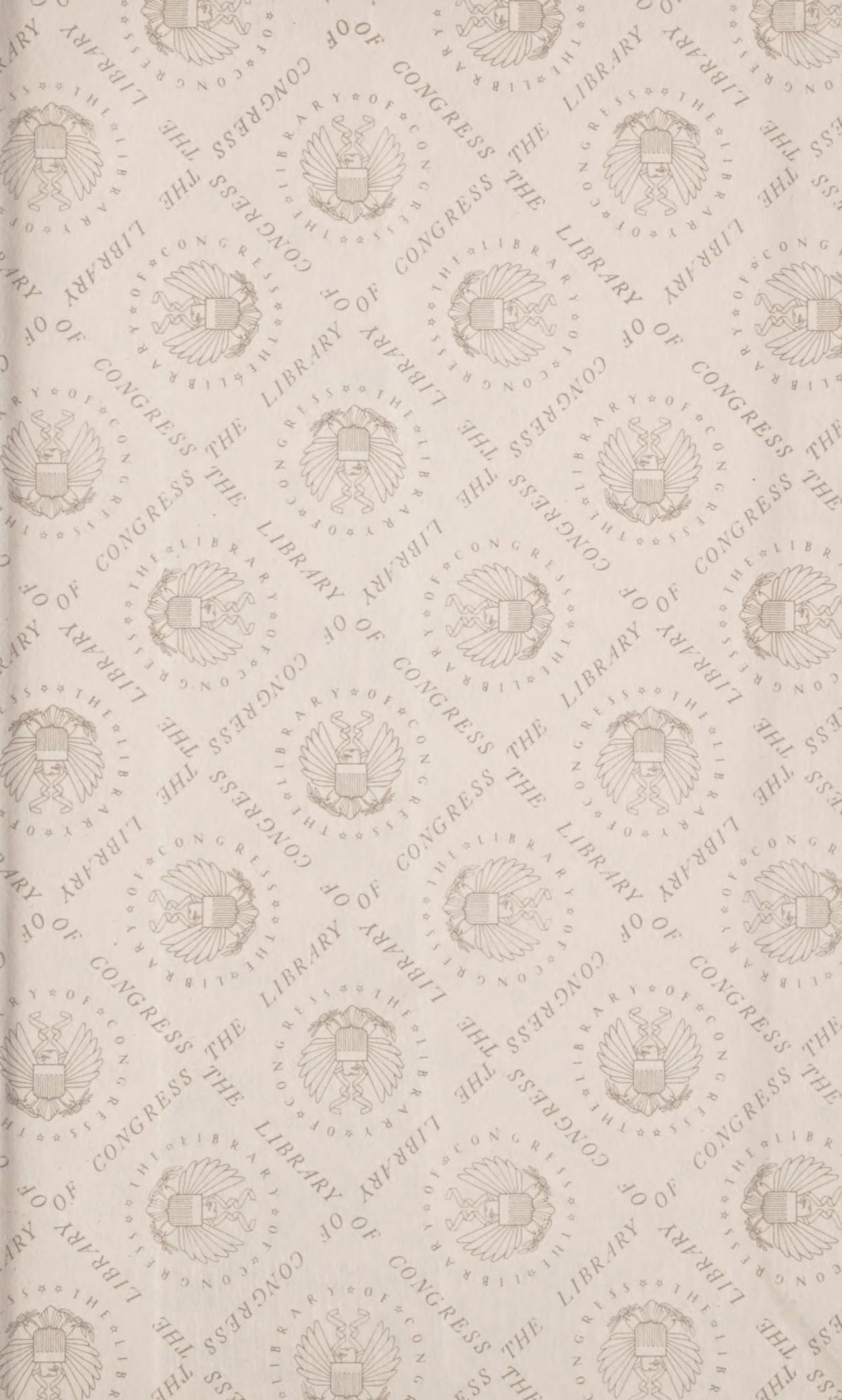
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